the future is ours

a komahina fanzine

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Cover Art by Sol

the future is ours - a komahina fanzine | 2022

THE FUTURE IS OURS

a komahina/kamukoma fanzine

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FOREWORD

Oh, you've finally got it.

This is a little embarassing, isn't it? Hinata-kun seems embarassed, anyways. But I find it quite lovely, even if sickeningly sincere and cheesy.

I'm writing this for us precisely because Hinata-kun's so embarassed. But I don't mind, I find it cute how worked up he gets about things like this!

It's shocking to go back and see how long I have known Hinata-kun - and to see what it has become now. From our school years, to despair, to the program, to waking up. It's strange, some of it doesn't even feel real anymore.

But I'm so happy to know that it was also worth it, because now I get to spend the rest of my life with Hinata-kun. (Fingers crossed, anyways.)

Ah, I'm sure you already heard about it right?
We got married. Right here on Jabberwock! There's a wedding picture inside, so don't worry if you missed it.

I hope Hinata-kun knows what he signed up for. I must be a very high maintenance husband.

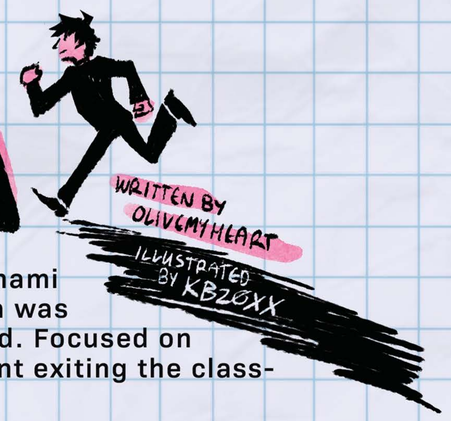
But, since you all seem to adore us so much (for reasons I can't say I understand - except Hinata-kun. I adore him just as much if not more than you all, I think) I hope you enjoy what you find inside. It's a bit of a memento for me, now. Filled with so many memories I hope I can never forget.

Ah, I've talked enough now. I'll stop here. Please, enjoy.
I really hope you do.

- KOMAEDA NAGITO

(& Hinata Hajime's quiet approval, of course)

Lost & Found



WRITTEN BY
OLIVCMYHEART
ILLUSTRATED BY
KBZ0XX

Hinata rushed through the corridors of the Main Course building, his black uniform a stark contrast against the pure-white walls. Today, like many days, Nanami had invited him to spend time with her class, and Hinata was hurrying to get there after Reserve Course classes ended. Focused on reaching his destination, he didn't notice another student exiting the classroom at the same time he was entering.

Until that student slammed his shoulder into Hinata's side. Hard.

"Hey!" Hinata shouted, swerving on his heel. He scowled when he recognized the person who'd attacked him: Komaeda Nagito, his rival, a smug smile dancing on his lips.

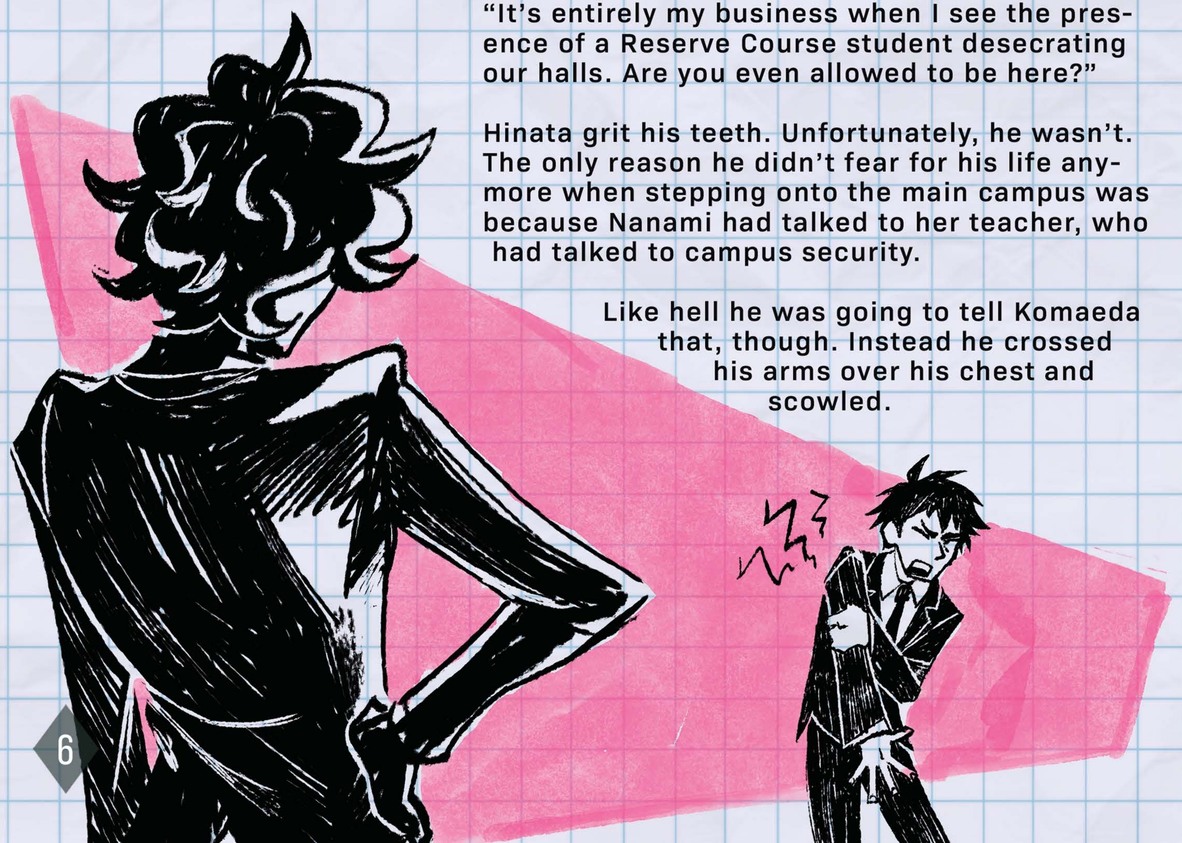
"What are you doing here?" Komaeda asked coolly, leaning against the classroom's doorframe.

"Nanami invited me to—ugh, it's none of your business!" Hinata yelled back, clenching his fists.

Komaeda tilted his head, staring at Hinata with an amused gaze. He ran his eyes downwards, sneering, before looking back up and raising his brows. "It's entirely my business when I see the presence of a Reserve Course student desecrating our halls. Are you even allowed to be here?"

Hinata grit his teeth. Unfortunately, he wasn't. The only reason he didn't fear for his life anymore when stepping onto the main campus was because Nanami had talked to her teacher, who had talked to campus security.

Like hell he was going to tell Komaeda that, though. Instead he crossed his arms over his chest and scowled.



"What about you? Were you just waiting for me to come through the door to shoulder-check me?" Hinata asked.

Komaeda smirked. "Running into you was a bit of bad luck on my part."

"Bull-shit. Seriously, do you ever think about how much effort you put into hating me? It's kind of pathetic," Hinata grumbled. He was half-hoping that Komaeda wouldn't hear him, but Komaeda did. He leaned over, so close that a loose strand of white hair nearly brushed Hinata's face.

"Trust me, I am well aware of my lowly station," Komaeda snarled. "But you clearly are not. Someone needs to remind you that you're nothing but a boring, average, worthless person who continuously mocks the bright hope of my classmates." Komaeda took a step closer, gripping the fabric of Hinata's shirt so tightly that it started to hurt. "You have no talent. You desecrate the name of Hope's Peak Academy with your presence. You're only allowed to fraternize with the Main Course students because you're lucky. You're worthless, and you don't deserve to be here."

Komaeda's words grew more and more vicious until he was practically growling, his face red and his eyes dark. Furious, Hinata slapped Komaeda's hand away. He glared, shoving past Komaeda into the classroom.

"Yeah, well, your classmates all want me here. That's more than I can say for you."

Hinata slammed the door in Komaeda's face, not wanting to look at him anymore. He set his bag against the wall, trying to shake off his bad mood as he accepted a game controller from Mioda.

Thinking about it later, though, after he'd been rotated out of the game, Hinata wished things had gone differently. Komaeda was a pain in the ass, but Hinata could tell he wasn't a bully for the sake of it. Hinata knew there was a reason Komaeda hated him so much—something more than his hatred of the Reserve Course—something that Hinata could figure out if they spent more time together.

He wanted to try. He didn't understand why he wanted so badly to try.

Thinking so much about Komaeda, Hinata's eyes kept wandering over to his desk. After about four or five times, Hinata noticed something red in the interior space, though Komaeda's desk was normally empty and meticulously clean. Hinata narrowed his eyes. Did Komaeda leave something?

Curious, Hinata walked over. His friend Souda perked up, glancing at the rest of the class before scurrying after Hinata.

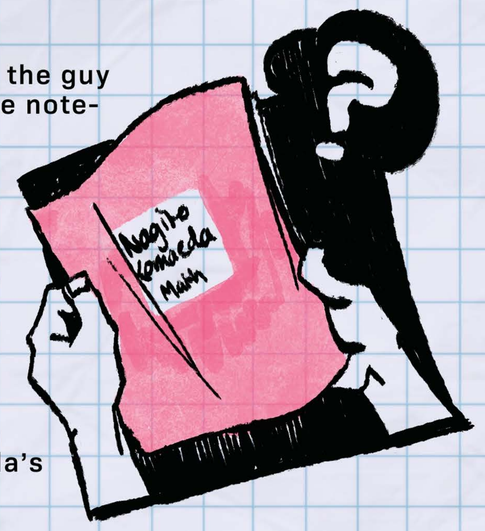
"What are you doing at Komaeda's desk?"

"I'm not doing anything. I just saw something," Hinata replied. He reached over, grabbing the item inside. It was a red notebook with the name Komaeda Nagito printed on the cover.

"He left his notebook," Hinata said.

Souda grabbed his beanie anxiously. "Oh man. Just leave it there, Hinata. He'll get it tomorrow."

Hinata frowned. He wasn't afraid of Komaeda, but the guy did make him uneasy. Hinata leaned over to put the notebook back.



Unfortunately, it slipped out of his hand and tumbled to the floor. Falling on its spine, the notebook opened to a page near the middle. Hinata groaned and was about to pick it up, but suddenly paused. Behind him, Souda let out a high-pitched, distressed-sounding whine.

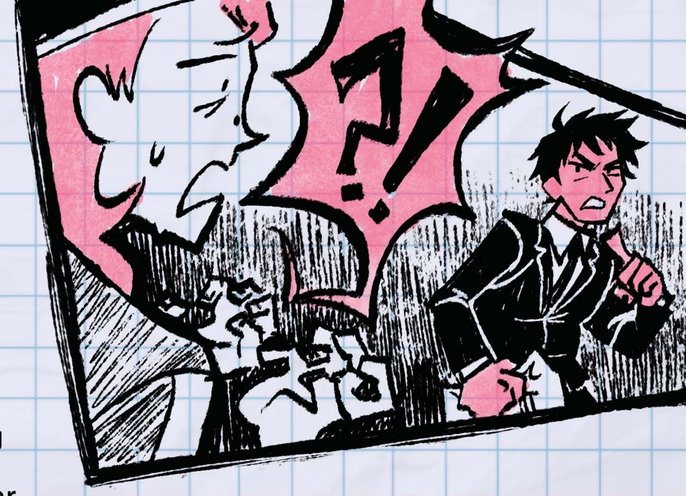
For once, Hinata was in complete agreement with Souda's theatrics—because they were staring at a sloppily-drawn love umbrella with his and Komaeda's names.

A few seconds of disbelieving silence passed, in which Hinata stood completely motionless, arm extended halfway to the floor. His first instinct was to doubt what he was seeing. Surely he'd somehow misunderstood the situation?

But no, those were the kanji for Hinata Hajime and Komaeda Nagito, written in Komaeda's handwriting, on either side of an umbrella topped with a heart. If that wasn't incriminating enough, there were the words "Hinata Nagito" written further down the page with small hearts drawn around the name.

Hinata's second instinct was to think this was a prank. He bent down and hastily snatched up the notebook, flipping backwards through the pages. Souda watched over his shoulder, distressed, as Hinata looked through a math notebook with lackluster notes. Every few pages had a love umbrella, or Hinata's name, or hearts, or marital rings. There was even a god-damn doodle of Hinata on one page, though Komaeda was a horrible artist. Hinata frowned self-consciously as he reached up to pat his head: surely that one strand didn't stick up that much, right?

"Oh man." Souda interrupted Hinata's thoughts, pulling his beanie down over his eyes. "Oh man, oh man, oh man! Dude, this is so creepy! That guy hates you, and he's a total nutcase!"



"He hates me," Hinata agreed, though his voice sounded far from certain. He thought Komaeda hated him, but what they were seeing was pretty unmistakable. "Maybe it's...a prank or something?"

"No way, dude! This is going way too far for a prank—and anyways, that's not Komaeda's style!" Souda's face had turned a concerning shade of pale. "Dude, this is like something out of those serial killer documentaries Miss Sonia makes us watch! We're gonna find your body in a river!"

"There isn't even a river near here," Hinata chastised. He needed to have a serious talk with Nanami about letting Souda attend scary movie nights. "And keep it down." He glanced towards the others. They were all absorbed watching Nanami zealously and mercilessly destroying Hanamura in Smash.

Souda looked at the rest of the class and whimpered. "Just put it back, dude."

Hinata looked at the notebook again, where obvious care was put into writing Hinata's name. Komaeda always harassed him—had he liked him the entire time?

The situation was weird, but Hinata didn't feel disgusted. He'd never seriously been a recipient of anyone's feelings, not like this. Wasn't it nice that someone recognized all of Hinata's flaws and was still in love with him anyways?

Hinata was actually kind of flattered. A smile bloomed across his face.

"I should return it to him," Hinata said slowly.

"Just leave it here!" Souda wailed. "We can pretend we never saw this."

Hinata spun on him, trying to look threatening. "You pretend you never saw this." Hinata paused, then let out a sigh. "I'm going to go talk to him."

———

Komaeda sat on a bench outside the Main Course dorms, head in his hands, feeling absolutely miserable.

Earlier he'd walked nearly all the way to the dorms before he was hit with the inescapable feeling that he was forgetting something. He'd dug through his backpack to find a conspicuous lack of his math notebook.

With Komaeda's Luck, he was certain that someone would find it and look through it. And Komaeda didn't even need Luck for someone to see what was scattered inside. Komaeda had written over nearly every page.

He let out another tortured groan, burying his face deeper in his hands. It wasn't his fault that math was such a boring subject, and his mind naturally wandered, and it definitely wasn't his fault that he'd fallen for the Reserve Course boy. Reserve Course students were, and always would be, talentless, worthless, and a stain on Hope's Peak's name, but it was so easy to overlook that when it came to Hinata. He was just too charming to resist.

The other thing was that Komaeda could see hope within Hinata: that burning, beautiful light that only talented people were supposed to possess. He clenched his hair tighter. This was a mess.

Komaeda was interrupted from his pitiful thoughts by the sound of someone running towards him. Komaeda raised his head, watching with dull eyes as Hinata approached, red notebook in his hands. He stopped by the bench, looking at Komaeda for a moment before extending the notebook outwards.

"You left this in the classroom," Hinata said.

Judging by Hinata's awkward countenance, he'd definitely seen what was inside. Komaeda stood and took it from his hands. Normally he'd reply with something insulting, but he couldn't find the energy right now.

"Thank you," Komaeda said, casting his eyes downwards.

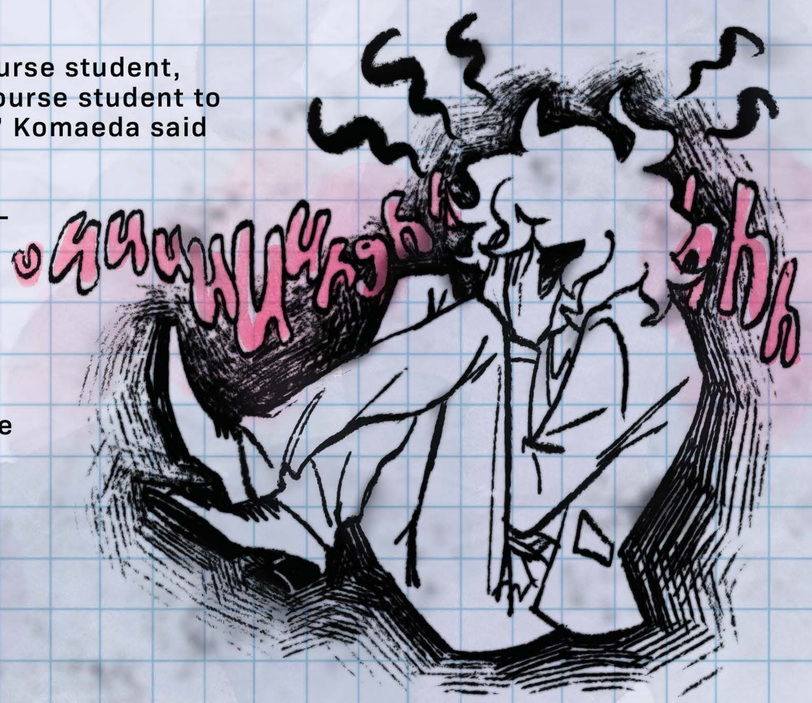
He was just about to head back to the dorm when Hinata spoke, stopping him in his tracks. "Hey Komaeda. I was thinking that...if you want...you and I could...hang out sometime?"

Komaeda looked back, surprised. "The Reserve Course student wants to spend time with me?"

"Don't give me that," Hinata grumbled. "I just thought—I don't know, you obviously like me at least a little, right? Maybe if we spent more time together we might get along better," he finished lamely, glancing aside.

"That's just like a Reserve Course student, taking advantage of a Main Course student to boost your own pathetic ego," Komaeda said with a smirk.

"H-hey, I'm not—!" Hinata protested, holding up his hands as his face turned red.



Komaeda sighed. The Reserve Course student was so cute.

"I was just joking. Are you free Saturday?" Komaeda said, his smile settling into something more comfortable.

Hinata scratched his neck.

"Uh, sorry, but no. I'm participating in this extracurricular project, and they want me to come in on Saturday. I'm not allowed to talk about it, but I might be busy that whole weekend..."

"It's fine," Komaeda interrupted. "How about Tuesday?"

Hinata grinned impishly. "Sure. And who knows, you might even find a reason to like me a lot more by then."

Komaeda shrugged. He wasn't quite sure what Hinata meant. "You know, I never thought a Reserve Course student would have the guts to ask me on a date," he said, sliding his hands into his pockets. At that word, Hinata blushed even more.

"Just give me your phone number," he grumbled, digging around in his bag.

Komaeda took the offered phone and put in his number as requested, then handed it back. "I suppose I'll see you later, Hinata-kun."

Hinata paused, then smiled brightly. "Hey, that's the first time you've called me by my actual name."

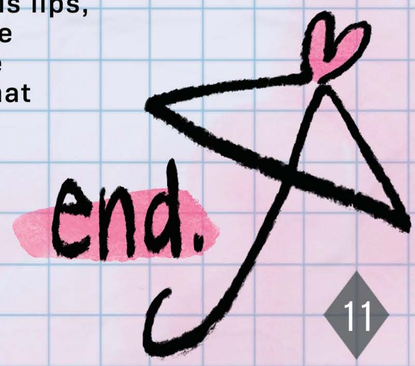
Komaeda couldn't fight his answering smile.

"How mundane to get excited over something like that," he said, though there wasn't much bite in it. Hinata could probably tell, because he only smiled wider.

"I...should probably return to Nanami now, or she'll get worried. I ran out pretty fast." Hinata glanced at the class building, then looked at Komaeda and gave him one more hesitant smile. "I'll definitely see you later though, Komaeda."

"See you later, Hinata-kun," Komaeda repeated, raising his hand. Hinata waved as he turned on his heel, and then he was gone, dashing back to the classroom.

Komaeda lowered his hand. A smile still curled up his lips, and he didn't care to repress it as he walked into the dorms. He should be dreading a date with a Reserve Course student, but he couldn't shake the feeling that this was good luck—very good luck.



After School Embarrassment

KaZoK

OW!

oops.

sooooorry...

THAT WAS ON PURPOSE!

oooh, did I hurt you?

I didn't realize the reserve course's handouts came with such flimsy shoes.

Maybe you should invest in a better pair!

WOULD YOU QUIT BEING SUCH AN ASSHOLE!

. . .

. . .

KB2

gasp

BANG

BANG

BANG!

HINATA?!

BANG!

BANG!

BANG!

WHAT THE FUUUUUCK

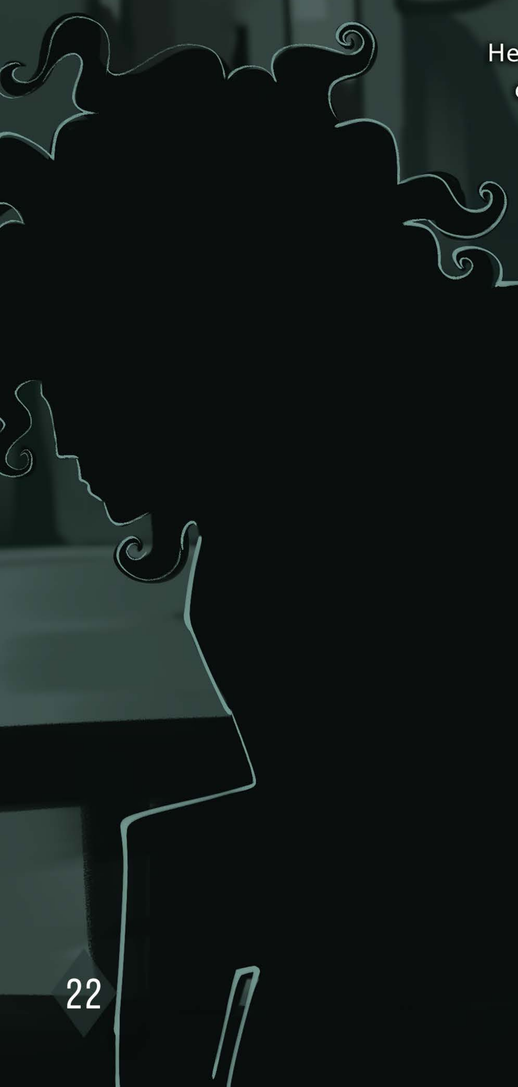
HUNGOVER IN THE CITY OF DUST

written by meshizuru & kidcarma
illustrated by sir-sunny

The Servant's legs sting with a pain that makes them feel numb all the way down to his toes, the adrenaline he's been running on finally beginning to wane.

Monaca is fast asleep on his back, likely from the excruciating pain of being crushed by rubble; it's a bit ironic that both of their legs are out of sorts right now, but he can't linger on it at the moment when all he can focus on is the thought, "Where next?", while trying to not pass out from the blood loss, seeping through his poorly tied bandages.

The ringing in his ears almost deafens him to the creaking sound of wheels on torn up pavement that comes up behind him, prompting him to stutter to a stop and look behind him, despite the screaming need in his head to keep walking, else he run out of steam and collapse before he can find somewhere to stop.



He can't stop the quiet, manic little laugh that wheezes out of his battered lungs when he sees who's behind him.

"Kamukura-sama," his voice croaks a little, making him sound halfway deranged and on the verge of passing out. The Ultimate Hope stands before him, or rather, behind him, pushing along a wheelbarrow with bits and scraps of machinery scattered inside.

"Get in," Kamukura orders, rather unceremoniously. "Your legs are going to give out soon."

"You shouldn't waste your strength on someone like me," he sighs wistfully but climbs into the wheelbarrow gingerly despite his words, maneuvering Monaca into his lap as he goes. He's not going to deny Kamukura, of course not, denying the most ultimate of the ultimate is unthinkable, but that doesn't mean he won't argue his point.

There's a hotel, abandoned but not yet rundown. Kamukura brings him and Monaca to it, and they find a first aid kit stored in the bathroom.

"This is a bit too kind of you. I didn't expect you of all people to pity scum like me, Kamukura-sama," he comments, sitting on the closed toilet.

Kamukura pays his thinking-out-loud no mind. "When was the last time you changed these bandages?"

"Time feels so nonexistent now," he gives, an initial non-answer. "Was it yesterday that she cut my legs? This morning? Longer, shorter? I don't really know... but I bandaged them today, I believe. It's not like I have a clock."

Kamukura goes quiet as he inspects his legs, and Servant finds himself shamefully admiring the sight of him as he does so.

"Why were you here, Kamukura-sama?" he asks, desperately trying to keep the silence filled. "In Towa, that is. If I had known...perhaps it wouldn't have taken this long for us to reunite. I could have been of service to whatever your means were."

"I am here in order to progress toward my own personal goal," Kamukura answers finally, moving closer to properly inspect Servant's bloodied thighs. With precise, steady hands, he gestures for Servant to comply with him as he works to unravel the soaked bandages, peeling back the layers and discarding them. "Your assistance would have been unnecessary. I was able to obtain what I came here for without difficulty."

"I see, I guess my assistance is always unnecessary... especially to someone like you, right?" That's expected—understandable, even. Considering Komaeda had been lying in the ruins of his own failed plans at the moment, blood soaking his thighs and a paralyzed young girl lying in the bed outside the door.

Kamukura doesn't pay his musings any mind, though. "These will need to be cleaned."

"Ah," he says, snapping back to reality when Kamukura speaks up, but still not looking away from his face—the man is captivating, he has to admit. "Do you need me to take off my pants for that? I really don't mind exposing myself, but I would advise against seeing my worthless body more than needed."

The rips in his slim, tight jeans just barely expose the wounds, which have blood stained around them, on the fabric and on his skin, seeping out and discoloring the black denim. The wound wasn't properly cleaned, Servant had simply bandaged it in a hurry after Nagisa dragged him back to their headquarters. He had

things to do that were more important than some measly leg wounds, so he instead relied on luck and adrenaline to keep him on his feet - enduring pain was nothing new to him. It was easy to tell how little he valued himself and took care with his body.

Without Kamukura answering yet, he assumes he needs to at least shuffle his pants down to his knees to have gashes on his thighs properly treated, so he stumbles up on shaky legs, trying to keep balance while he moves to undo his trousers. Immediately, pain shoots through his limbs again, more dull but still unpleasant, and that makes the effort to stay up while simultaneously undressing even more difficult.

Despite his attempt to ignore it and keep from keeling over, his pain must be evident enough that Kamukura wasn't going to bother letting him try.

“Brace your weight on me,” Kamukura tells him, the tone in his voice suggesting there’s little room for argument, offering his shoulders for Servant to grab instead. A very quiet, but nervous-sounding giggle escapes him suddenly at the offer regardless, feeling so very unworthy but equally eager.

He puts his healthy hand on Kamukura's shoulder delicately, trying to not be annoying despite how much he desires this closeness with the other - but he quickly realizes upon doing this that his mitted hand will be of no use here. Before he can even question this issue, though, Kamukura's hand is on the fly of his jeans and Servant feels like his quiet giddiness will reach maximum and soon overflow.

"You're being almost too considerate of me," Servant speaks softly, given he was close to Kamukura's ear like this. Carefully, he steps out of his jeans, wincing as he makes the effort to pick his legs up without keeling over, both of his arms bracing against Kamukura in something that was close to an embrace. "Why have you elected to even help me, Kamukura-sama?"

There’s silence in place of an answer, as Kamukura helps him out of his jeans and leads him to sit back down, before retrieving a washcloth and wetting it.

“You are giving me too much credit,”

Kamukura deadpans. “I am not necessarily cruel, but I am not kind either. You are a necessary factor in the outcome of my plan,” Kamukura offers, just as vaguely as all of his other explanations; Servant’s curiosity is piqued, but there’s no room to press further when the sudden sting of freezing cold water is pressed up against his wounds. Sufficiently clean, he takes the blood-soaked cloth to the sink, and wrings the excess out to wet it again and repeat the process on Servant’s other leg.

He watches as Kamukura tended to his wounds with precise, skilled care, doing enough to properly let it heal, but not enough to be gentle and mind the pain it was causing him. Servant doesn’t mind. Having someone so beautiful and utterly drowning in hope cause him pain is welcomed, especially for a change, when most of it had been for the sake of despair, lately.

"...I-I don't think so, haha," Servant squirms a little, failing to keep still—whether that was from pain, pleasure, excitement, nervousness, was up to interpretation.

“Most people would have left me to rot, Kamukura-sama... or at least have forced me to walk by myself, even if you were going to treat me. And really, that would be deserved. Carrying me, treating me, rescuing me... it's all too kind, and undeserved. So of course, I'm really happy right now..." A wide, deranged grin spreads across his lips. "So of course, in response to this... I hope you'll let me repay the favor. It's only fair."
“It would have made no sense to let you continue to walk on your own, knowing I was going to treat you,” Kamukura explains, lifting out some of the first aid kits’ contents. An alcohol swab to sanitize, suturing thread, needle, as well as some fresh gauze.

Kamukura sets them aside momentarily to roll his sleeves up and out of the way, undoing the buttons on the cuffs of his dress shirt for good measure. “That would have only exacerbated your injuries, therefore making more work for me in the long run.”

"There is little, if anything, that you could provide for me which I could not do for myself. However, I will not stop you," Kamukura tells him as he begins to sanitize the wounds, quickly and efficiently, before withdrawing to assess his limited selection of medical tools. "These are going to require stitches."

"If that's what you see fit," the Servant chirps, feeling just a slight bit of unease at the thought but letting that wash away for instead the thrill of being tended to by Kamukura. It's far better than having Tsumiki treat him in any capacity, though anything would be. Even so, he finds his feet kicking back and forth rather childishly as a show of anxiety, until the other places a hand on the swell of his thigh, just shy of the wound, to stop and steady him.

"Don't move."

It's a simple request, but Servant finds he's having trouble obliging it. It could be a mix of nerves, he's never quite liked medical procedures and hospitals and all that, but it may also have to do with the feeling of skin-on-skin contact from the other in what may be considered an intimate area by many. He's nothing if not depraved, and far too lonely after so much time spent around murderous children and no one else.

Of course he ends up giggling, which makes his upper body tremble with the effort to squeeze the noise out of his chest. He opens his mouth like he wants to say something, perhaps apologize for being so incompetent at such a small request, but before he can steady himself and his thoughts enough to do so, Kamukura's grip is tightening on his leg and forcing it still, before wordlessly piercing his skin with the needle. The laughter abruptly dissolves into a painful gasp, almost like a wheeze, and his arms briefly flail and wrap around himself, tightly, like it'll ground him.

The pain is near excruciating - though he's certainly felt worse, having a needle pulled through your skin without any anesthetics is different, it makes his mind and limbs feel numb. Kamukura is apathetic, and thus somewhat merciless, as he carefully yet efficiently tugs the needles through his skin, in and out, slowly closing the wound. The effort to keep him still is challenging, and even more so is his unspoken effort to keep himself quiet, for fear of being a nuisance to Kamukura's work.

The first leg is done before he can comprehend it, the edges of his vision turning black, and a dizzy sort of nausea rolling through his temple. Out of relief and his body's urge to pass out, he slumps backward where he sits, every inch of him trembling.

"Breathe," Kamukura reminds as he regards Servant with a brief stare, like he's assessing whether or not he's really going to faint, while his hand idly cleans the blood from his leg, and readies himself to do the next. "Otherwise, you're going to pass out. Unless that would be preferable to you. I have no problem with continuing while you're unconscious."

The offer is almost laughable, and he does manage to wheeze out a small laugh, because as they both know Servant is not weak, not truly, and he's certainly not going to slip unconscious while Kamukura is on his knees in front of him, touching his legs, tending to him. Any moment may as well be a godsend to him—and it's every moment that he wants to experience, even through the agonizing pain.

"No, no," he's gasping a little and trying to shake his head, stupidly making himself dizzier, eyes lidded and unfocused. He tightens his arms around himself. "No. I won't pass out, hah. I promise, Kamukura-sama. I can take the pain."

It's a test of his loyalty, he thinks. How far he can go. He wants to assure the other that he'll go as far as it is possible for his pathetic body to do so, if it will prove his devotion. Love, he might even dare to say, though he shouldn't be so selfish.

"Very well, then."

Not giving Servant more than a few breaths to recover, Kamukura moves onto the next leg, pulling the stitches through just as clinically, uncaringly as he had for the first. No pause, no hesitation in his movements. Another cry ravages his throat, the needle back sinking into his skin and making him tremble in pain. He curls his toes up hard enough to cramp, and once again savages his poor leather jacket, which was already beaten and dirty and worse for wear to begin with, but the sound of his nails scraping against the fabric makes for an unpleasant noise on top of it all.

Bowing his head forward, he sinks his teeth into his lower lip so that he can muffle his whimpers, so rough and unforgiving with himself that his already dry and cracked lip splits, drawing blood and leaving the taste of iron on his tongue. But he hardly notices or cares, because his brain couldn't focus on anything but the agonizing pain of being stabbed repeatedly with a tiny little needle, having a wound sewn shut without anything to dull the pain. Dizzying, he threatens to slump forward and fall unconscious, even if briefly, but he can't—he said he wouldn't.

The pain doesn't subside once Kamukura finishes, so he almost doesn't notice until he sees the image of him standing up through his hazy, pain-addled vision. The other man doesn't speak to announce he's finished, considering it's obvious, instead just retrieving the bare minimum to clean him off the blood once again, and gauze to rewrap his wounds properly this time. Servant is compliant, as always, so out of it and loopy on pain and pleasure that his limbs were pliable under Kamukura's hands, like a rag doll. It didn't take much effort to move him around.

"You aren't to move around much, or you'll tear your stitches. If you need help, you'll ask me."

It's a deeply unappealing thought, asking someone who stands so far above him for help, like he so much as deserves it. He must visibly grimace at it, drawing too much attention to his face, because Kamukura takes note of the small bit of blood now dripping down his split lip by reaching out to swipe it off with his thumb.

It manages to stun him so quiet that he forgets he was going to protest his help, instead gawking briefly before croaking out a bruised, "Okay. Though please, don't feel compelled to help scum like myself more than absolutely necessary."

It's quiet for a moment—Kamukura doesn't find it useful to respond to Servant's needless deflections, instead opting to swiftly move past it by hoisting the other man up in his arms, and exiting the hotel bathroom. Monaca is still out cold on the bed, and Kamukura sets him carefully beside her, so as not to disturb her.

He can't keep his mouth shut, despite Kamukura's clear affinity for silence. "Are you going to leave, Kamukura-sama? Forgive me if I'm overstepping, but I did mean it when I said I intend to repay you—if you'll allow me."

A beat of silence, as Kamukura eyes him. "I'll be around. Should you wish to follow me, I will not stop you."

And that was enough. Servant would be more than content with that, if it was allowed. He's grinning, even when the other turns to leave.

Servant wishes he could follow him on his heel as he was offered, though his legs won't let him. "Ah, already?" He sounds disappointed, naturally, though a bit drowsy where he lies. Shuffling back a bit, he lies his head on the dusty old pillow, his messy fluffs of hair splaying around him, and he folds his hands over his midsection and lies flat on his back akin to a corpse in a casket. He may be bloodied enough to fit the part.

"How cruel... Goodnight, then, Kamukura-sama."

The Ultimate Hope leaves without any goodbye in return.

THE FUTURE IS OURS

a komahina/kamukoma fanzine

NO PLACE TO STAY

ZOOT

WELL! THIS IS BAD

20 SECONDS IS NOT ENOUGH TO DISARM THIS ONE...

TIK TIK TIK

TIK TIK

TIK

00:19

HEH HEH

SUCH BAD LUCK...

BOOM

WHAT THE HELL WAS THAT?

AH, HAJIME!

MY COTTAGE MYSTERIOUSLY BLEW UP...

...HOW STRANGE!

YEAH, RIGHT...

I SMELL BULLSHIT!

THERE'S NO WAY YOU DIDN'T DO THAT YOURSELF

DOES IT REALLY MATTER IF I DID IT MYSELF OR NOT?

THE FACT OF THE MATTER IS THAT IT'S GONE!

AND NOW I HAVE NOWHERE TO SLEEP...

HEH HEH

CAN I SLEEP IN YOUR COTTAGE?

...SINCE YOU'RE OUT HERE ALREADY

SLEEP?

IN MY COTTAGE...?

UHHH... NO.

YOU'RE RIGHT, HOW AUDACIOUS OF ME TO SUGGEST!

I DESERVE TO SLEEP OUTSIDE IN THE COLD

WHAT COLD?

WE LIVE ON A TROPICAL ISLAND

PLEASE...

HAJIME...

NO!

DONT COME ANY FUCKING CLOSER!

YOU'RE NOT ALLOWED IN MY COTTAGE!

I UNDERSTAND...

WHY WOULD YOU WANT A WRETCHED CREATURE LIKE ME IN YOUR COTTAGE?

-LONG STARE-

U U

WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

WHY ARE YOU LOOKING AT ME LIKE THAT?

THANK YOU, HAJIME!

THIS IS MUCH WARMER AND MORE COMFORTABLE THAN SLEEPING OUTSIDE!

I OWE YOU ONE!

GOD... OKAY...

YOU NEED TO PROMISE ME YOU'RE NOT GONNA TELL ANYONE ABOUT THIS

WHO WOULD I EVEN TELL?

THE END

ZOOT

Haah... I wish you'd hurry and get out of my sight, Hinata-kun

...

Is that so?

THEN LET GO OF MY HAND ALREADY!!

and stop squeezing, that hurts!

...You don't understand

I hate you so much, Hinata-kun.

THEN WHY don't you just—

!?

...

THUMP! THUMP!

Ah.

LET ME DOWN SLOWLY

written by anantagonist
art by sol-illo

The wind made the palm leaves whisper in the sunny, lonesome morning. The water barely moved in the pool, reflecting with an intense shimmer the unforgiving sun of that endless summer.

Komaeda took cover from the sun under the shade of a parasol, though not large enough to cover him whole as he lay in his recliner. In his swimming trunks, his bare legs were left outside the protection, stretched under the sunlight. Hinata couldn't help but stare at the pale skin shining like pearls, almost white... surely he burned with ease. He looked down at his own legs, healthy golden under the light. Komaeda spent a lot of time in the sun, yet didn't burn... neither did he. Strange.

Komaeda looked at him and, as their eyes met, immediately smiled. Hinata responded with a smile of his own before looking back at the mesmerizing dance of reflections on the water's surface.

The situation in the island was stressful, without exit, but at least he could relax a bit that day and trust in his classmates' word that no one would do something like killing, and they'd search for a solution together. After the short pause, Komaeda continued speaking.

"I don't think the idea of a raft is good... it'd be very difficult to row out far enough into the ocean for the waves to not pull us back to the islands. The chances of survival are pretty low. And if I'm there, you'll probably all die while only I survive. And that wouldn't do. What do you think, Hinata-kun?"

Hinata considered seriously what Komaeda explained, bringing his hand up near his lips, he remained thoughtful for some moments. He still didn't understand his companion's talent, but had already become accustomed to those slightly odd comments he dropped, so he didn't linger as much on that.

"You're right, a raft isn't enough. It wouldn't be viable to make a lot of them either, even if it makes the most sense for the amount of food and water we'd have to carry..." He thought aloud, gesticulating with his hand until he let it rest back on his wet towel.

Komaeda lowered his eyes to the hand between them, each on their own recliner. Without warning, he stretched his own hand out and placed it atop the brown-haired boy's, holding it.

Hinata's eyes widened in surprise and he stared at the snow-haired boy, who smiled

'Komaeda's a weird guy, but not a bad one,' Hinata thought, watching him more minutely.

He didn't find him unlikeable either, but the contrary… in a peculiar way, he had his appeal. Especially when the soft breeze moved his fluffy and light hair just so, as softly-colored as to make the red hibiscus stuck above his ear stand out with its vivid red among a pastel-colored frame.

He took a quick glance around. They were alone, nobody in sight. He answered the touch by closing his fingers around the other's hand and offering a somewhat timid smile. He could've sworn he heard his accelerated heartbeat in the silence.

Almost immediately Komaeda, with the same naturlity as he'd taken it, released his hand and raised his own in quick greeting. "Nanami–san. Good morning."

Hinata watched with horror as the aforementioned came out of the hotel lobby where she'd surely been gaming, though she seemed half-asleep enough to not even have noticed his presence, headed straight to the cottages.

Komaeda just maintained his relaxed smile, like nothing, while he in contrast felt his heart rushing from fright now. He sighed to steel himself, though with fear still on his face.

"That was close. Almost got caught…"

—

As the islands were opened and there was more space to explore, less people were there to explore it, accentuating the feeling that they'd been forgotten in that little corner of the world. But despite the air of grief and discouragement that had been invading them, that night it seemed like the girls and a few boys were finding space to smile, even momentarily.

Having gotten ahold of fireworks, they planned to light them on the beach after nightfall. For the time being, being only dusk, everyone sat and laughed on the sand as Akane and Nekomaru had a friendly spar.

Somewhat apart, sitting by each other, Hinata and Komaeda watched as they spoke in low voices.

"… I miss them so much… I can't stop thinking about all of it. Even going to the beach is a bitter reminder, I don't wanna be even close to that house." Hinata stared fixedly at his toes, half buried in the fine sand. He didn't often open up about such personal feelings with anyone, but Komaeda was there and he listened. After the impact of the first trial and having felt that it was never the other boy who misled him, but he himself who had seen what he wanted to see, he couldn't help but draw close to him again.

Komaeda watched the group have fun, a slight smile on his lips. "We should think about what to do when we get out."

Hinata furrowed his brow, feeling ignored, but as he raised his eyes to the other's he found no discomfort or malice in them. '*Guess he's just trying to distract me*,' he thought, attempting to collaborate and ponder. But before he could formulate an answer, he saw Komaeda stand and begin to step away.

"The hell, Komaeda…" He murmured, putting his knees together to brace himself against the breeze that began to cool his damp shirt.

"Hinata-kun. I want to show you something, would you come?"

His voice seemed brought by the wind, and as he raised his eyes again he found Komaeda had stopped and awaited him a few paces away, his long jacket swaying and guarding his bare chest and swimsuit-clad body.

Without much thought he stood up, brushing the sand away from his own swimsuit before following the other. As they advanced on and self the road to trek between shrubbery and palm trees, the brown-haired boy began to fear what he might find out there. Was Komaeda leading him away to kill him? No, it wasn't likely. Was he going to show him a body? His mind immediately began going through who he'd seen that way, when was the last he saw them and where…

They stopped at a clearing, where lightning bugs floated like little stars in the darkness of night. Komaeda approached, taking advantage of the other's distraction to take his hand, intertwining their fingers.

"We won't get caught this way," he whispered with a smile, able to see the color rising to Hinata's cheeks.

"O-Okay…" A big nervous and thoroughly embarrassed, Hinata remained in front of the other boy, their hands as their only contact. His olive eyes went back to his face, that charmingly innocent smile and thick white eyelashes.

It was the perfect time. "Close your eyes then. Don't peek." He muttered, and grew all the more embarrassed at the enthusiasm with which Komaeda closed his eyes tight.

"Are you going to kill me? Here?"

"What? No! Shut up! Just keep them closed."

As he saw that Komaeda indeed obeyed and his eyes and his mouth shut, he took courage and approached.

His lips barely touched the other's in a timid brush before pressing with more confidence. The little exclamation got caught on the inside of Komaeda's lips but he remained still, obedient.

It had been the first kiss shared between them, out of many others.

—

Never in his life had he felt this way. Hunger gripped at his stomach in a way he hadn't thought possible; cramps extended to his chest and seemed to drain him of energy to the point of even making walking difficult.

'Food… food… food…' was the only word occupying his head, making it near impossible to focus on finding a way out of that place. Despair seemed real now, looming, breathing constantly down the back of his neck. He feared someone would let it take them and cause more death.

He dragged his feet slowly down to the hall to his room, already feeling as though it was impossible to look at the horrid green wall without growing nauseous. He was sweating from that ridiculous training too. Komaeda's apparition before his eyes, despite surprising, came slowly to him, as did his reaction several seconds after.

"You don't look so good, Hinata-kun. Hunger is really affecting everyone. Hello? Are you still distrusting me? Always so cautious. I've been thinking… of a way to be useful. Would you like to eat me? I could give you a part of me… it wouldn't be so nutritious and we don't have anything as sharp as a knife we could use to…"

Komaeda's mouth was promptly covered by Hinata's hand.

"Shh… enough, Komaeda. Just shut up. I'm too tired for th-… huh?! What the hell are you doing?!" He pulled his hand back, wet with saliva, looking with a mix of surprise, disgust and flush at the smiling boy.

"It's salty… must be sweat…" Komaeda spoke in an airy, weak voice as his hand fell to his stomach, which rumbled, just as pained by hunger.

Steps from the hall signaled that people were approaching and, taking him by the wrist, he pulled Komaeda inside his room. His cold and uncomfortable room, that at least provided some privacy. He closed the door.

"What the hell do you think you're doing? You can't go around licking… were you trying to eat

me?” He babbled, still incredulous about the gesture and the way the other didn’t seem to notice how odd he acted.

Komaeda drew close, pulling up his sleeve to show his bony, pale wrist. “There’s not much… but I’m sure you can get something out of it.”

Hinata immediately shoved the wrist away from his face, rejecting whatever twisted offer it was with the gesture.

After some seconds of confusion, the white-haired boy laughed and pulled his sleeve back down. “Of course it’s disgusting for you to eat someone like me…”

“Don’t be stupid, Komaeda…” He sighed. He dried his hand on his shirt before reaching out and taking the other’s, weaving their fingers together.

The memory of the first time they’d done that relieved him a little, making a slight smile appear on his lips.

He wasn’t alone in there, and it didn’t have to do with physical people, but the secret they shared. He had a much more profound and personal support from Komaeda than anyone else. Relying on it, he closed his eyes and let his forehead rest against the other boy’s.

“I’m so tired, Nagito… there’s no way out… no hope… I don’t know what to do.” His voice rose in pitch as he spoke, increasingly trembling, his throat finally closing up when Komaeda held him against his body.

“There’s still things we haven’t tried. And I’ll help you, Hinata-kun.” He spoke so feebly that it was only heard thanks to the silence within the closed room.

Hinata leaned his weight against Komaeda, mentally and physically exhausted. He had him close enough to feel his comforting heart. He tilted his head and, with a slight brush of the nose, drew close to his lips.

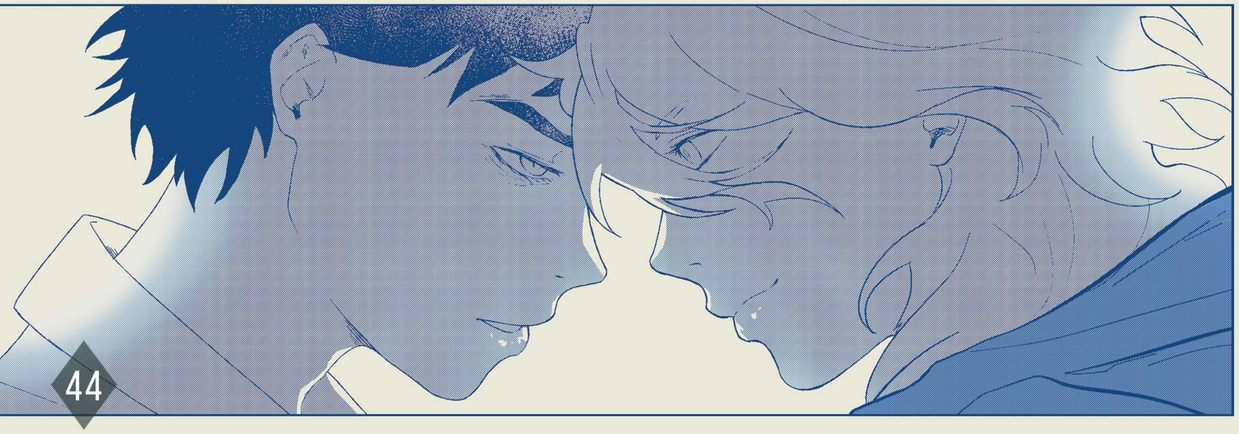
Komaeda responded calmly to the kiss. His mouth was dry from dehydration, but they were both so hungry that just feeling something against the tongue was enough to make them salivate. This time it was the white-haired boy who pulled back, keeping their hands joined and their bodies close. Through the thin walls, the louder voices of those coming down the hall could be heard.

“They’re arguing out there… we should go see.” Komaeda whispered against the other’s lips.

Hinata nodded, feeling his strength somewhat replenished, though mostly a little more motivated to keep trying. “I’ll go see what’s up…”

They pulled away and headed out, leaving their little moment and the kiss behind. While Hinata was left to the group, Komaeda swiftly continued on his way down the hall, towards the strawberry tower. The remainder of touch still tickled his dry lips and hope burned in his chest.

Crimson walls greeted him as he exited the elevator, as well as the imposing face of a clown painted on the gates no one should cross, though he would. The place where he’d find the disheartening truth about Hinata and, by his own accord, make that one kiss their last.



DREAMING OF ME, OF YOU, OF US.

WRITTEN BY MOSHIMOCHI

ILLUSTRATED BY LOISKA_J

The strange feelings began on a perfectly ordinary day, a morning which Komaeda anticipated to be just another mundane chronicle in the story of his average life.

Komaeda did not believe in grandiose concepts such as fate or serendipity. The most superstitious belief he held was that there was a fixed quantity of luck in the world, though small and insignificant. He noticed that when he would suffer from a bout of small misfortune, such as the Dr. Hopper vending machine on campus eating his money with no payoff, this would be followed by a random stroke of good luck impacting his friends, such as Souda's crush texting him back rather than blocking him. If these fleeting moments of unluckiness he experienced brought joy to those around him, he would be more than content to endure it for the sake of his loved ones.

And if he was lucky in some regard, it's that he found some truly wonderful friends.

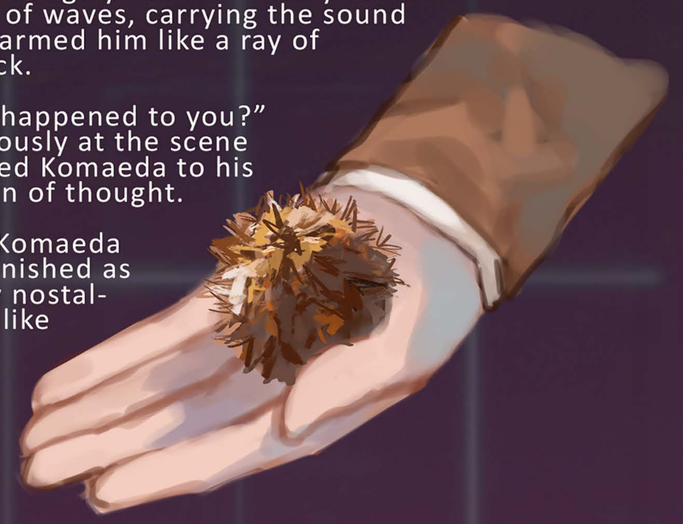
He hoped one of said friends enjoyed whatever small fortune the universe must currently be blessing them with, because it was quite inconvenient for him to nearly be hit by a car on the way to school. Komaeda barely dodged the impact of the oncoming vehicle by twisting off of the sidewalk, tumbling into a bush. Leave it to him to get his uniform dirty on the way to class, so unseemly!

As he sat up, picking leaves and other remnants of the earth's detritus from his hair, his finger pricked on a sharp burr. Komaeda fought with his unruly curls to get the object out of his hair–he might be completely unremarkable, but it wouldn't do to show up to class looking even more unkempt than he normally does.

After a bit of fretting, he managed to dislodge what was a large chestnut, biting bristles catching on white strands of hair. Komaeda rolled the nut in his hand, taking in the familiar brown color and feeling the spines press sharply into his palm. He felt something stirring inside him, like a word that rested on the tip of his tongue but was hiding petulantly behind his lips. And if he closed his eyes, he could strangely smell the briny scent of wind rolling off of the crests of waves, carrying the sound of someone's laughter which warmed him like a ray of sunshine on the nape of his neck.

"Are you coming to–jeez, what happened to you?" Kuzuryuu said, staring incredulously at the scene before him. He practically yanked Komaeda to his feet, jostling him out of his train of thought.

"Nothing out of the ordinary," Komaeda smiled. The sense of deja vu vanished as quickly as it came, the uncanny nostalgia slipping through his fingers like sand. Perhaps he hit his head a bit harder than he realized.



Komaeda let the chestnut fall from his hands and went to class.

For the rest of the day, he couldn't shake off a panging feeling of loneliness in his gut, a kind of disquiet that was impossible to put into words. Komaeda was never the type to yearn for adoration or fame, unlike some of his classmates who grappled for the spotlight despite their lack of talent. He appreciated having a quiet schedule with ample time to read in the park, nap under the trees, and float with the current of easy school days. But as Souda delighted in sharing the details of his latest successful endeavor of talking to Sonia, Komaeda felt the smile plastered across his own face to lack sincerity. It wasn't that he disapproved of the budding relationship between his two friends (while he frankly didn't comprehend it), but rather he couldn't share the feeling of being so enthralled with someone else. Perhaps he would never feel that kind of bubbling eagerness that turned Souda into an embarrassing dog nipping at Sonia's polished heels, but he had never experienced the kind of intensity that keeps Kuzuryuu perpetually in Peko's orbit, either.

He wound a tendril of white hair around his finger as Yukizome-sensei started their morning lesson, twisting it around and around. Is that what he longed for, a deeper kind of companionship? It felt like an act of repulsive greed to ask for such a thing, when he already had more than enough to be content with.

He was too preoccupied with his troubling thoughts to pay attention to his teacher, or to notice the stranger watching him from the window in the classroom door.

***

The only noise to keep Hinata company this late into the evening was the steady humming of a desk fan, keeping the island's oppressive temperature at bay so that the systems which kept Komaeda alive did not overheat and malfunction. His desk was littered with sheared pages from notebooks detailing failed psychodives, strategies for Alter Ego to wake Komaeda from the stubborn sleep he clung to. This setup felt like another one of Komaeda's games, one final chance for Hinata to prove that he could break through his winding traps of words and see Komaeda for who he was. Hinata wouldn't fail this time.

Hinata never strayed far from the Neo World Program laboratory if possible, tearing through packets of instant coffee to fight the demands of sleep – he often needed to be reminded that he was still a man and not a machine. It was, admittedly, a work in progress.

"Yo, are you coming to dinner?" Kuzuryuu called, pushing open the door to the lab. Judging by the weak light filtering in from the outside world, the sun was setting.

"I think I'm getting close to a breakthrough," Hinata said, not looking up from the screen. As if on cue, his stomach growled, a reminder that even some of the world's most wanted criminals were weakened by banal desires such as hunger.

"Whatever," is all Kuzuryuu said in response, letting the door swing behind him, knowing that Hinata would trail after him in a moment.

Finishing the last line of code, he reluctantly pushed away from his desk. There, on the other side of the room, Komaeda lay so peacefully that Hinata wondered if he had ever slept so well before in life. Without his telltale manic laughter and gray eyes clouding with despair, Hinata could still see the frame of a boy he met on the beach. One who had a soft smile that calmed him, even when the happiness of their island getaway succumbed to confusion and chaos.

Deep down, he's just the same as that boy from his memories, minus the hand, of course. Another problem for another day.

Hinata walked back to the resort with a heavy longing in his chest, a biting gnaw that won't relent until he can talk to Komaeda again as equals, as friends again. He swore to his classmates that they would find hope again, and Hinata was not willing to leave Komaeda behind as they forged a path of forgiveness and healing during their second chance at living. Most of Class 77-B were at least sympathetic to Hinata's pursuits if not Komaeda himself, but phantom wounds still sting from time to time. At least Souda was willing to brainstorm the solution to tough technical problems.

"If you're tryna' bust into his brain, maybe you need to think like him?" Souda offered helpfully, shoveling down the meal that Hanamura tried to elevate from post-apocalyptic rations to something with a bit of flavor.

Kuzuryuu clanked his glass on the table. "That's the dumbest thing I've ever heard."

"It's reverse engineering!" Souda gestured exaggeratedly in the air, nearly smacking a hamster off of Gundham's shoulder. "Sometimes you need to take something apart first before you can figure out how to put it back together."

The objective of the Neo World Program was to rehabilitate their class, and with a twinge in his forehead he was immediately reminded of why that initial plan failed. But if he wanted to help Komaeda heal, was the solution that he needed to break him down even further?

Well, if he broke the program once, he could probably break it again, right?

Ignoring the stares which ranged from curious to concerned, Hinata left the dining hall to return to the lab. Alter Ego's unblinking red eyes observed him as he hunched over his desk, ruminating over what needed to be done. In the first psychodive he launched, Hinata noted that a certain reserve course student was distinctly absent from the rest of their group, a thought that curdled in his mind for longer than he'd like to admit. Alter Ego reported that Komaeda spent most of his days socializing with Class 77-B, where even the surliest of their peers were able to form friendships with him in a way that never came to fruition on the island. Only in his imagination, free from the corruption that came with his talent, Komaeda was able to find happiness through others.

Somewhere in the back of his mind, emerging from a memory filled with the image of cloying strawberries and a life on the precipice of hope and despair, Hinata heard a voice: *"I've finally realized what I wanted all along- somebody's love."*

He's typing lines of code before his conscious mind could match the pace of his body's reaction. "Just a little bit longer," Hinata said to a room where nobody could answer.

Alter Ego launched for another psychodive.

***

Komaeda liked the color green because it was calming. Today, the sky of the new world burned bright red, the color of acrylic nails he once knew, the color of someone's eye he was getting reacquainted with. These changes were jarring, but not anymore so than the limb that quietly whirred when his fingers drummed along the edge of the ship, a steady *rap rap rap* to give some consistency to his rapidly changing surroundings. He might've been dreaming again, the feeling amplified when he looked at the person next him, with mismatched irises and choppy hair tousled even wilder by the sea breeze.

Despite everything, Hinata seemed to glow even brighter than before, blinding him with an aura of hopefulness that screamed in his face *"how could you ever forget me?"* He shone like the sun, bright and painful to stare at directly. It was greedy, and Komaeda knew that someone like himself belonged in the shadows, but he couldn't help but to turn his face into the rays of the other's warmth.

Hinata laid a hand overtop of his own, skin resting on cool metal and settling his nervous tapping. Had Hinata always been so perceptive of his anxious moods, or was that Kamukura-kun's doing? In the end, it didn't matter. Hinata had decided to wait for him and stand alongside him, and that would always be more than enough.

"Are you alright?" Hinata asked, squeezing his steel palm gently. The artificial nerve endings in the metal sang under his touch, heavy and real. "It's a lot to take in."

"The present?" Komaeda said, looking over his shoulder to the rest of their friends milling about the boat, having announced their presence to society again to protect Naegi and his vision for the Future Foundation. Now marked as fugitives, they set course to Jabberwock Island to hide from the ire of the world which should have rightfully destroyed them. "Or do you mean the past?"

"Both," Hinata said, shrugging. "You didn't have very long to… Get adjusted," he said, trailing off. Before Komaeda could respond, Hinata said quickly, all at once, "If you hated me for waking you up, for ruining your happiness, I wouldn't blame you."

Komaeda paused, biting his lip. "I'm a weak, pitiful creature," he said earnestly, while cynical laughter slipped through his words. "I think it's because of that I was never able to truly hate you."

Hinata's grip tightened, and he looked at Komaeda with piercing eyes. "You aren't weak. You're here now, and we're going to build a better future together." Seeing Hinata like this, charmingly genuine, chillingly serious, and looking at him like he was the one worth believing in, made it obvious why he was the one to set the Neo World ablaze in his wake.

"'*Together*', Hinata-kun?" Komaeda teased, watching an alluring pink color spread from Hinata's ears and disappeared under his buttoned white collar. It was impetuous of Komaeda to have made a joke like that, but something about Hinata's presence made him feel uncharacisterically brave.

He really was strange.

Hinata huffed, expression prickling, but Komaeda knew better than to assume he was truly irritated. "Geez, I almost forgot how frustrating you are."

"You must regret waking me up."

"Of course not. Never."

Uncomfortable giggles threatened to bubble out of his chest, but Komaeda tampered it down, sealing his lips together so tight it hurt.

From the periphery of his vision, he saw how Hinata's gaze tracked the movement, lingering on where his teeth pinched the center of his lip. It could've been the innocuous swaying of the ship, but if he didn't know any better, it might appear as if Hinata was leaning inwards. He was so close, he could see near-imperceptible freckles that bloomed across Hinata's nose, intimate details of his face that no simulation or memory could ever replicate so artfully. Hinata was devastatingly handsome and *real*.

Komaeda broke away, scoffing. "Naming yourself the World Destroyer—that's a bit hamfisted, don't you think?"

The overwhelming proximity of Hinata's presence dissipated as he pulled back, snorting incredulously. "I spent days working on each psychodive, I barely slept." Knocking his shoulder into Komaeda's, he rolled his eyes. "Sorry, thinking of a cooler name wasn't high on my list of priorities."

"And I was?" Komaeda said, before weighing the consequences of asking such a question.

Hinata's sarcastic demeanor flattened into solemnity. "Yeah. You were." Hinata looked back towards the water, allowing the conversation to be filled with cries from a gull circling ahead. They must be getting close to land. "You still *are*."

"I don't understand." Komaeda responded, watching the waters ahead churn around them, waves breaking and yielding against the surety of the ship's stem. He moved to pull some of his hair back away from his face, but startled when he felt the length of it. Right, it had grown past his shoulders now.

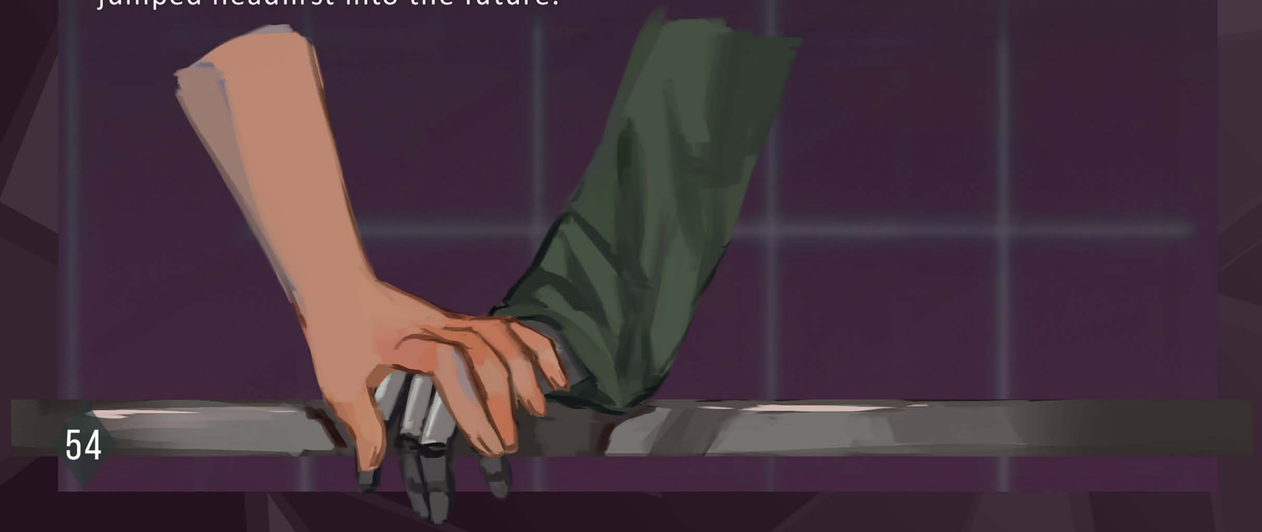
Hinata's brow softened, sympathetic. "You deserve a second chance as much as the rest of us. We all have a new start to begin. I couldn't just… Not fight for yours, too."

In the distance, jutting out in defiance against the amber sky, was the outline of a chain of islands. When they dock at Jabberwock, so much would change.

"Are you ready?" Hinata asked, extending his palm as they pulled into the shore.

It felt foolhardy to call the stirring in his chest "hope," but nonetheless, Komaeda found himself willing to take a leap of faith in the face of all his fears.

"Yes," Komaeda said as he took the outreached hand into his own, and he jumped headfirst into the future.



HEY

CAN YOU HEAR ME?

IT'S NICE TO SEE YOU AWAKE

YOU'RE TOO KIND TO ME, HINATA-KUN...

AH-

OH.

BEFORE WE GO SEE EVERYONE, THERE'S SOMETHING I WANTED TO SHOW YOU.

...

WELL...

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

I KNOW IT'S A BIG CHANGE, SO IF YOU NEED SOME TIME TO ADJUST OR-

I LOVE IT.

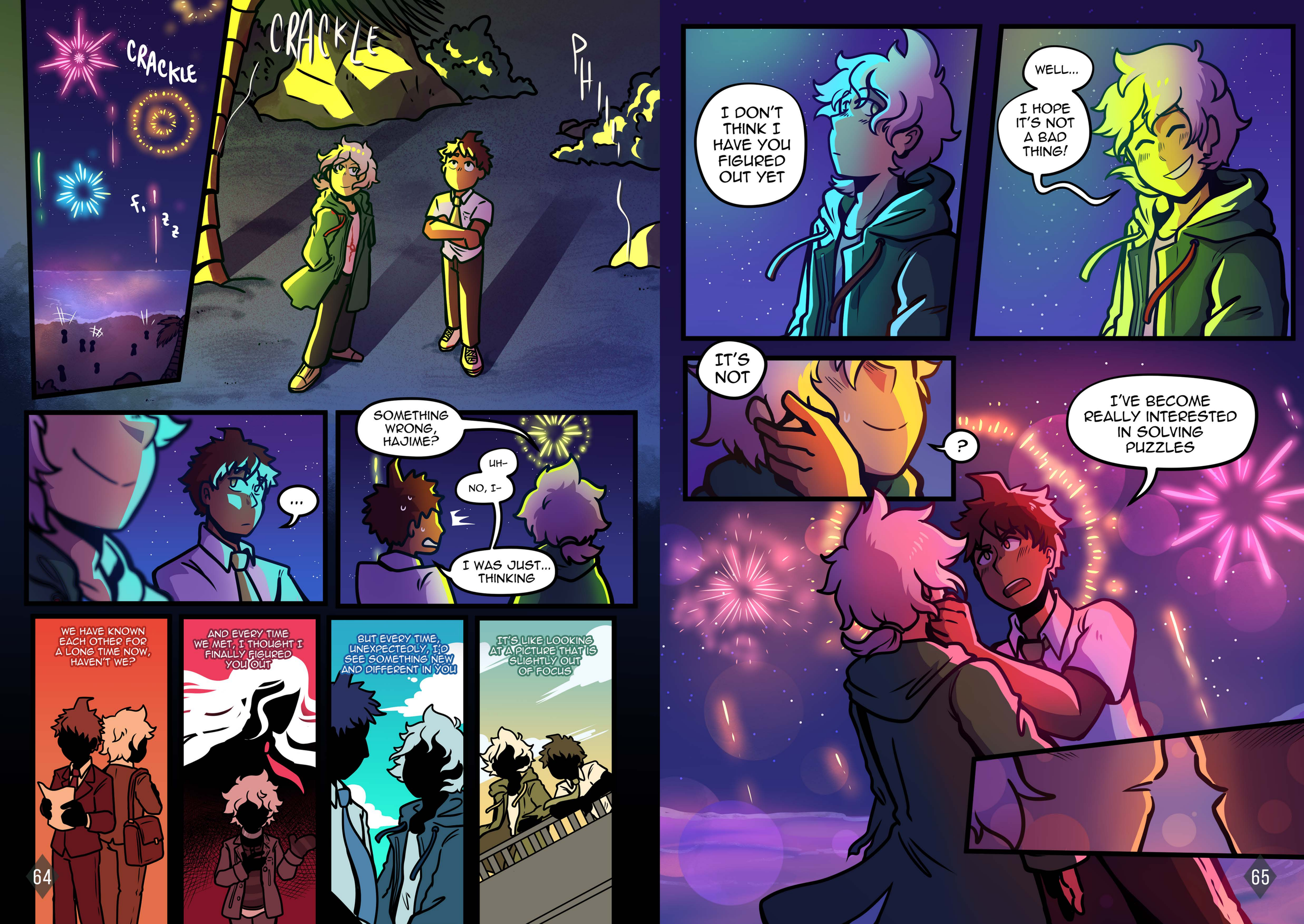
THOUGH I FEEL IT'S MUCH MORE THAN SOMEONE LIKE ME DESERVES...

HEY

WE'VE ALL GOT REGRETS THAT WE CARRY WITH US

YOU DESERVE A FUTURE JUST AS MUCH AS ANYONE ELSE ON THIS ISLAND.

COME MEET UP WITH THE OTHERS WHEN YOU'RE READY, OKAY?


CRACKLE
CRACKLE
PHIIII
...
SOMETHING WRONG, HAJIME?
UH-
NO, I-
I WAS JUST... THINKING
WE HAVE KNOWN EACH OTHER FOR A LONG TIME NOW, HAVEN'T WE?
AND EVERY TIME WE MET, I THOUGHT I FINALLY FIGURED YOU OUT
BUT EVERY TIME, UNEXPECTEDLY, I'D SEE SOMETHING NEW AND DIFFERENT IN YOU
IT'S LIKE LOOKING AT A PICTURE THAT IS SLIGHTLY OUT OF FOCUS
I DON'T THINK I HAVE YOU FIGURED OUT YET
WELL...
I HOPE IT'S NOT A BAD THING!
IT'S NOT
?
I'VE BECOME REALLY INTERESTED IN SOLVING PUZZLES

Pfft-

HEHEHEH...

A PUZZLE...

WAIT, NO, HAJIME!!

I'M SORRY, COME BACK HERE!

TURN

I'M NOT TAKING CRITICISM FROM YOU OF ALL PEOPLE ON-

CONFESSIONS?

Silence...

...

YOU KNOW-

I ALWAYS LOVED THIS SIDE OF YOU

EVERYTIME I THINK I KNOW YOU, YOU JUST SURPRISE ME ONCE MORE!

I HAVE NEVER STOPPED BEING DRAWN TO YOU

YOU COULD ALMOST SAY

THAT YOU'RE A MYSTERY I'D LOVE TO FIGURE OUT!

...THAT WAS AWFUL

DEFINITELY BETTER THAN THE "I HATE YOU, LEAVE ME" THOUGH...

WE'RE BOTH TERRIBLE AT THIS!

MAYBE WE SHOULD STOP TALKING AND START KISSING, HUH?

YOU KNOW-

UH...

Tu

G

THAT-

THAT'S PROBABLY A BETTER IDEA-

YOU'RE STILL TALKING, HAJIME

CHU!

Nightside Bloom

written by starsinew
illustrated by moochisun

It’s easy for Hinata to jump the gate and scurry into the descending darkness. The sounds of music and boisterous voices trail after him from the pool area. They grow fainter the further down the beach he gets, dissipating into nothing more than a whispering breeze. The low tide rolls back and forth, lapping playfully at Hinata’s ankles, coating them in sandy grit.

Though he’d never admit it aloud, Hinata had been hiding in his cottage, avoiding the party in the hotel area,hoping nobody would come for him. When they inevitably had—Mioda and Sonia practically kicking in his door, all bright eyes and voices, cheeks flushed from whatever cocktails were on the menu— Hinata had realised his position had become untenable. Cut to him disappearing like a thief in the night after assuring the girls he’d be there soon, for sure, yes he knows they’ve made kusamochi, and no he isn't about to disrespect them by letting it go to waste.

Hinata intends to make an appearance at the party. He *does*. It’s just… complicated.

The last streaks of pink and orange sky are draining away. Hinata stands there for a while, watching them bleed into purple-black, stars thrown into even sharper relief. And then he stands there for a while longer.

He’ll go soon, he promises himself. Five more minutes.

And if worst comes to worst, he can always go to one of the other islands to sleep for the night.

“Hinata-kun?”

Hinata almost bolts out of his skin, whirling around with a wet crunch of sand beneath his feet. His racing heart begins to settle at the sight before him, lapsing into a pleasant—if still slightly nervous—hum. It’s full dark now, but the moonlight is bright and beaming, draping along the sharp planes of Komaeda’s face in a way that’s almost spectral, pale hair catching the gentle breeze like wispy lace curtains over a forgotten window.

“...It’s you.” Hinata realises he’s a little breathless.

Komaeda laughs. It’s characteristically brittle, but the sound is a comfort to Hinata by now.

“It’s me,” he agrees, “I apologise unreservedly.”

The thing is—Hinata had hoped Komaeda would find him. Hinata holds out his hand for the other boy, and can’t help but smile when the gesture makes Komaeda break into an uncontrollable grin of his own. He’s quick about the business of coming to Hinata’s side.

Hinata furrows his brow as he approaches. “...Did you bring an entire cocktail shaker?”

Komaeda looks nonplussed. “The others said I had to.”

The dizzy, sugary silliness fades a bit. “Oh.”

Komaeda fidgets in place. His belt chain clinks as if it’s intentionally trying to make the silence more suffocating.

“You don’t have to be present, Hinata-kun,” Komaeda says, his voice so gentle, so infuriatingly understanding, that Hinata can’t help but glance away. “You’re allowed to stand alone on the beach all night, if you want to. After all, you’re the birth—”

“Mmmm!”

Hinata darts forward, pressing his palm over Komaeda's mouth. Komaeda freezes, eyes going wide. Hinata snatches the cocktail shaker away from him, unscrewing the cap and flinging it into the ocean. Distraction. He needs a distraction. He chugs at least a third of whatever burning concoction Hanamura has sent after him, pulling back with a slight cough and wiping froth from his mouth with the back of his hand.

He thrusts the shaker at Komaeda. “Drink.”

“But it’s for you—”

“Drink it, Komaeda.”

Komaeda holds out for another beat of silence, then gives Hinata a beatific smile as he accepts the shaker, raising it in a toast, then to his lips with a prim delicateness. “Well, far be it from me to deny your wishes on this, the eve of your—”

Oh. Hinata narrows his eyes. Komaeda is doing it on *purpose*. Well, *that’s* annoying. Hinata reaches out, splaying his fingers against the cold metal bottom of the shaker to tilt it up, forcing him to drink faster. Komaeda’s eyes widen, but then they crinkle a bit with mirth. *Asshole*, Hinata thinks. He eventually relents. When he’s good and ready.

Komaeda splutters. “That was mean, Hinata-kun.” Obviously supposed to be an accusation, though Komaeda doesn’t seem all that upset. “But if that’s how you want to party…”

“Is that what this is?” Hinata drawls.

“I’m not sure that standing on the beach all alone strictly counts as a party. Then again, I’ve been invited to partake in so few of them, my opinion is probably worthless.” Komaeda is so mild about it. It makes Hinata want to scream. As does Komaeda’s indulgence of Hinata’s desired silence.

Hinata breaks eventually, though. Like he always does when it comes to Komaeda.

“Why are you here? Just to make fun of me?” Hinata takes a petulant mouthful of… cocktail. Whatever it is. He can’t really tell. He passes it to Komaeda when he’s done.

“Would you believe me if I said I was worried about you?” Komaeda sounds a little offended. He takes a sip, looks off into the rolling tide. “Or even that I missed you?”

Hinata scoffs. “Plenty of other people to hang out with if you’re feeling lonely.”

“If I wanted to be at the party,” Komaeda says, the faintest glint of an edge in his voice, “I would be at the party.”

Rare for Komaeda to sound so touchy. Hinata considers himself rebuked.

Awkward silence settles over them. A particularly itchy wool blanket—suffocating when they’re on the beach and it’s warm out. Hinata reflects on just how good he is at this. Why would Komaeda bother to miss him, anyway. Pretty pathetic judgement on his part.

Hinata feels something cold against his fingers. He glances down. Komaeda passing the shaker back to him. The skim of metal fingers against his. He sighs. Drinks. Passes it back.

It’s a gorgeous night. The stars are a vivid ribbon of iridescence, the moon is brilliant and omniscient, and there the pair of them are, standing in dead silence, sharing in mystery cocktail and the sudden sour mood.

Typical, Hinata thinks.

Eventually, the tide rolls in more, and they run out of cocktail. Hinata isn’t particularly happy about it. He bends down to lodge the empty shaker in the sand. Crunch. He sighs. Digs a savage knuckle into his eyeball.

“Komaeda. I—” He glances up, finds himself hypnotised for a moment by the soft blue light glancing off the sharpness of Komaeda’s features—

Wait.

Hinata’s head jerks up to look out at the ocean before them. He jumps, almost a foot off the swash, landing with a splash as Komaeda lets out a soft gasp.

“Komaeda. Are you sure Hanamura didn’t put anything shady in that drink?”

“Yes. Certain.” Komaeda sounds distant. “I made it, actually.”

“Oh. Right. Okay.” Unexpected. “So did you notice this huge thing of bioluminescent phytoplankton rolling in and decided to keep it a secret, or are you as surprised as I am?”

“Definitely surprised.” Komaeda’s voice is quiet.

Hinata falls silent, gaping out at the sprawling constellations of blue pinprick lights rolling along the swell of waves. The plankton washes up around them, scattering across the shore as if from a broken bottle, a mirror of the stars above them. Lights in the sky and lights in the sand.

“...Just for the record,” Hinata says, still battling his disbelief, “These guys. Don’t live. In this part of the world.”

“Well. Aren’t we lucky, then.”

“Yeah,” Hinata says, and then, softer, “Yeah. We are.”

Hinata blinks blue sparkles from his vision as he reaches out to take Komaeda’s hand. Komaeda jumps, a twitch, a soft inhale— then long, cold fingers interlace between his own. Hinata squeezes—there’s a moment, and then Komaeda squeezes back.

“You think this is a sign?” Hinata is kind of joking, but also, decidedly isn’t.

“Oh, almost definitely. But of what, I’m not certain.”

Hinata glances down, seeking guidance in scattered blue lights. He’s just accepted he’s going to be a wreck about this kind of stuff, especially when Komaeda has the absolute nerve to stand there in front of him, looking all soft and somehow prettier than the once-in-a-lifetime biogeographical anomaly vying for Hinata’s attention.

“Do you ever just...” Hinata tightens his grip on Komaeda’s hand as he looks up at him. “Get tired of being sad all the time?”

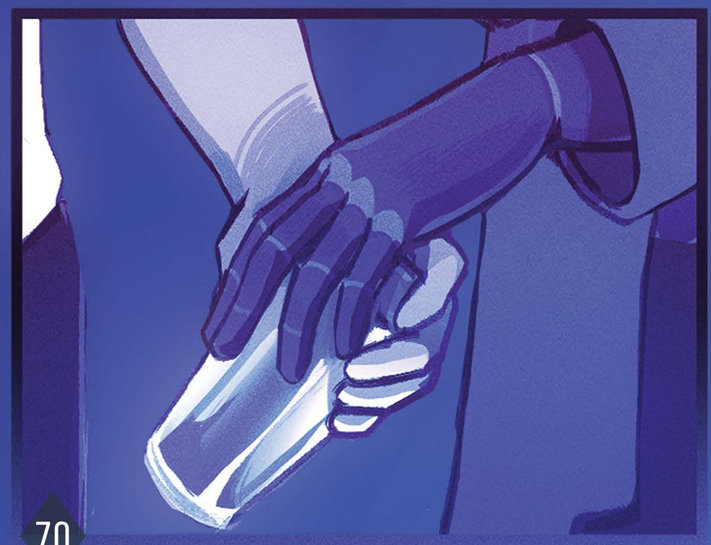
Komaeda laughs. Dry and dusty. Not a single trace of mirth. “Sometimes.” His voice is dull, heavy enough with sincerity that the twinge of sympathy it rouses in Hinata almost hurts.

“Okay. So. Maybe we can just. You know. Have fun? Together?”

“... Fun,” echoes Komaeda, like it’s a word from a foreign language he’s only hearing for the first time.

Hinata gets it. The idea is kind of unbelievable even to himself. “Yeah.”

“O-oh. What... did you have in mind, Hinata-kun?”



The words leave Hinata’s mouth before they’ve even fully formed in his mind.

“Oh, you know. I was thinking maybe we can just have fun together. For. The rest of our lives?”

The scant amount of colour that lives in Komaeda’s face drains away in an instant. Hinata finds himself wishing the sand beneath him would open up in a gaping, abyssal maw, and swallow him whole.

“Why am I so bad at this?” It’s mostly addressed to the sand, because it’s not like it can reply, lack of mouth and all, and he's not so much interested in honest feedback as he is in indulging vague lamentation. “You know what. Forget I said anything.”

Silence. Hinata screws his eyes shut. And then, soft, but uncompromising:

“What if I don’t want to forget?”

Hinata’s eyes fly open. The earnest intensity, bright in Komaeda’s gaze, in the colour bleeding into his cheeks, is inescapable in the soft blue light. It makes his breath catch in his chest. “I’d given up on having a ‘rest of my life’ to live.”

Hinata worries at his lower lip. “Yeah. Me too.”

“But now...” Komaeda’s eyes soften, “We have one.”

Hinata nods.

“So. If we don’t do anything with it... what was the point? Of any of it?”

Hinata stares at Komaeda—the blush already draining from his face, eyes becoming wary, darting around, like he’s remembering where they are. The moment is passing, Hinata realises. So he steps forward, to cradle Komaeda’s jaw in trembling fingers, to trip up the moment as it tries to leave them behind.

“I think,” he says, voice shaking a little, “You were the point, Komaeda.”

Komaeda’s eyes are impossibly wide as Hinata tilts his head and leans in—

An unholy cacophony splits the air. Screams and cheers and what Hinata thinks might be gunshots from the hotel area. The two of them linger, completely still and silent, close enough that Hinata is aware of Komaeda’s heart, beating rabbit-quick.

“Ah.” Hinata can feel Komaeda’s breath ghosting over his lips. “That’s midnight, then.”

“Ugh,” is all Hinata has to say, allowing his head to loll back in exasperation. When he raises it again, Komaeda is staring at him, eyes brimming with hope.

“Will you let me say it, Hinata-kun?” Komaeda asks, way too sweet.

Hinata just rolls his eyes and waves a hand in silent, affectionate defeat.

Komaeda beams, and, okay, he's pretty cute. “Happy birthday, Hinata-kun,” he says, gently, “I’m... afraid I don’t have anything for you.”

Hinata shakes his head. “You do,” he says, “Actually.” Everything. What he still can’t quite bring himself to say yet. You’re everything, Komaeda. Instead, he gestures to the shaker, wedged in the sand. “Like this completely unidentifiable cocktail you’ve made,” he jokes.

Komaeda blinks. Then he laughs, like it’s the funniest thing he’s ever heard, and Hinata is gone.

Komaeda lets out a little surprised noise when Hinata reaches out and cups his face again, surging up to meet him open-mouthed. There's a second of hesitation, and then Komaeda is slipping his fingers through Hinata’s hair, dragging him closer, and, oh wow. Teeth.

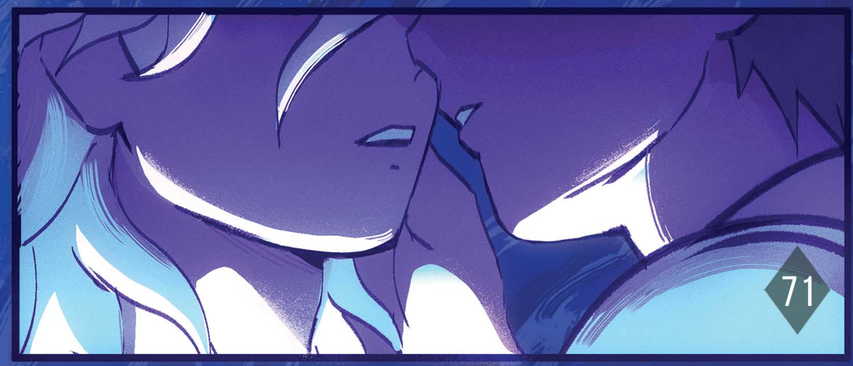
Hinata’s birthday could be going a lot worse. All things considered.

“...The drink... it was supposed to be a corpse reviver.” Komaeda’s voice is so soft and muffled against Hinata’s lips, barely audible over the crashing of the tide.

It takes Hinata a second. Then he scoffs, gives Komaeda a gentle headbutt. “Aha. Very funny.”

“Just my little joke, Hinata-kun.”

Komaeda sounds very pleased with himself.



IT'S ALWAYS YOU, FOREVER

WRITTEN BY Meshinuii ILLUSTRATED BY Zoot

Hinata never thought leaden limbs would serve as comfort to him. The bone-deep ache, sharp, spindling stabs of energy as trapped limbs under icy restraints seek feeling free of pain…it only served as a reminder of the blinding fluorescents mimicking heavenly light, devoid of feeling as ascension to was rought with a scalpel and promises of godhood.

Yet under Komaeda's weight, the ache brought with it a different reminder.

Hinata's arm was asleep, as was the man who lay atop it, pins and needles pricking him in tandem with the steady rhythm of warm breaths, both tickling his skin with the illusory mimicry of touch.

There was something about Komaeda when he was asleep that was otherworldly. Sunlight streamed through the window to bathe him in golden light, gossamer curls aglow, framing his face like a halo. Shadows lent themselves to soften his angular face, so contrary to how they once hardened it, a gaunt face with eyes ablaze in a courtroom, in a hospital bed, in the Strawberry House, venomous words berating him, always berating him. The pallid mask he once adorned to weaponize his emotions and confound them all once only slipped away unwittingly.

He could remember when they had all first awoken, seeing Komaeda clearly for what, to him, seemed like the first time. Nothing left to hide, body still under sterile blue light and a thick layer of glass. The vulnerability in his expression, with nothing left to hide, drowning not in the warm ocean waves that once reflected off a serene smile and an extended hand, but in the confines of his own mind.

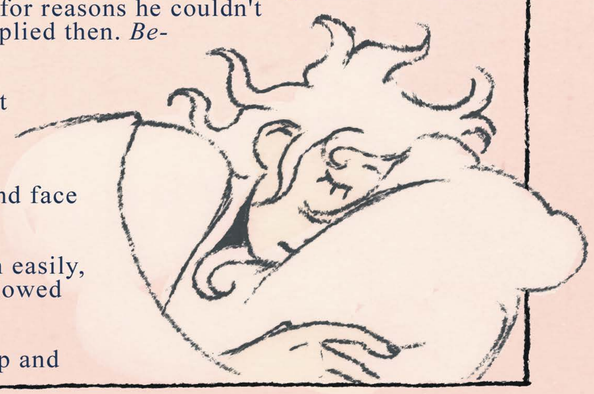
Hinata promised himself then that he'd see that expression on him while awake.

When Komaeda had awoken, the hand that had been extended to him on a fabricated beach in a pocket out of time suddenly served as a reminder of who they really were, far from the unmarred innocence returned to them on the island and forced to face the idolatry that infected their minds.

"Ah, Kamukura Izuru...? No, you're Hinata, right? I suppose I should thank you for waking me up?"

Komaeda grasped the future promised to him with a rotting remnant of their shared past, expression reminiscent of the boy Hinata met on the beach, open, easy, and bright. It seemed Hinata's promise to himself had been fulfilled.

When Komaeda next awoke, an empty hospital room with one less limb to account for, Hinata found himself once more trapped in a vision of the past— waiting outside a closed door holding his breath, too scared to face him for reasons he couldn't name. *Because he was dangerous*, his mind supplied then. *Because I still cared*, his mind supplied now.



He didn't walk into a scene of depravity, did not feel his mouth go dry and his hands grow clammy. There was only silence, stark and suffocating, labored breathing and tense shoulders and a mess of white curls that refused to turn and face him.

"You're awake." His voice filled the small room easily, making the air constrict around them. He swallowed hard.

"How observant." Komaeda's voice was sharp and

cold, a dangling spear poised at Hinata's throat waiting for him to make the wrong move. He had been that way since they'd left the pod room.

Hinata paid it no mind.

"How are you feeling? Is your arm giving you any trouble?"

"What arm, Hinata-kun?" he waved his arm at Hinata, smile not reaching his eyes. "I lost it years ago, remember? Or have you conveniently forgotten that too?"

"Komaeda—"

"Don't you remember? How I butchered myself? There was so much blood—"

"*Komaeda*—"

"You sneered when I showed you. You were so disgusted. Is that why you got rid of it now? You still can't stand the sight of it, can you, Kamukura-sam—"

"*Enough*." He sighed through his nose, taking deep breaths and cringing when he noted how humorlessly gleeful Komaeda's expression turned in the face of his agitation. "I'm not just Kamukura anymore. I told you that. Her arm is gone because it was killing you, Komaeda. We all have things from our past that are hurting us, but—"

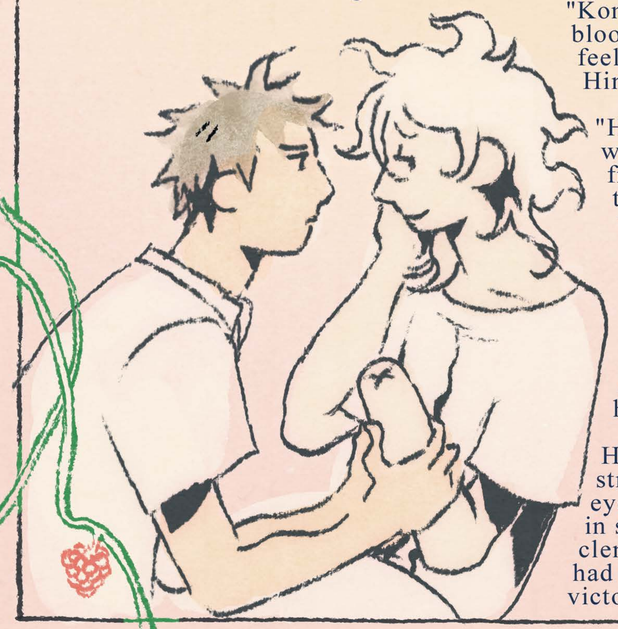
"What hurts you, Hinata-kun? The scar on your forehead, perhaps? Your reminder that you are so pathetic you let them mutilate you just for a *taste* of the hope your classmates— rather, *my* classmates had pouring out of them...or perhaps it's that nasty red eye. How many times did that eye impassively watch so many die, suffer, beg for mercy under your heel...or maybe it's the green one? A reminder of the humanity you failed to eradicate. Of the worthless vermin you didn't leave behind. How can you look me in the eyes, knowing what you've done? How you treated me? Doesn't it make you feel sick to your stomach? Knowing you failed?" His nails dig into his arm, swirling eyes unblinking.

Hinata didn't stop him.

"You're everything I despise. A false idol, daring to call himself the 'Ultimate Hope.' Any fabrication you can call a 'talent' only exists off the suffering you cause. You should know your place by now. Kamukura-sama, Hinata-kun, whoever you are..."

They sat in silence. Komaeda closed in on himself, shaking slightly. Hinata watched him silently, piecing together the bits of truth Komaeda laid out for him. He could remember a million moments just like this, technicolor splendor splattered in blood, all the times he turned his back on Komaeda and gave up far too soon. Despite the venom in his words, his tone, Hinata knew better by now. He would do better this time.

He wouldn't lose him. Not again.



"Komaeda." He watched as blunted nails drew blood on translucent skin. "I know how you feel," Komaeda scoffed but didn't retort. Hinata smiled. *Good.*

"Honestly, we're a lot alike. I think that's why I can understand where you're coming from. I'm not going to lie to you and say this will be easy. We're all dealing with what we've done, what we've seen, who we've hurt. But what matters now is what we *could* do. Together. You are just as deserving of forgiveness as everyone else. The past is just that— the past. We can't forget it, but I won't let you live in it either. You're going to get better. You— you don't have a choice."

He had flustered a little, suddenly struck with how vibrant Komaeda's eyes shone when they weren't obscured in shadow or deceit. His fist was clenched, his brow furrowed, but he had turned to look at Hinata. A small victory.

"Is this an order, Hinata-kun? I thought we were moving away from our past? Is that not more akin to Kamukura-sama's behavior?" Hinata sighed as Komaeda resumed staring out the window. "You can try as hard as you please, Hinata-kun. I won't stop you. Who am I to hinder the Ultimate Hope's attempt at redemption, employing his charity to fix the broken...how truly noble you are."

Komaeda refused to look at him again after that, as hard as he tried. As Hinata plays with Komaeda's soft curls as he sleeps, he wonders whether anything he said afterward would have made a difference. He wishes he had told him then that he was worthy of happiness, of love, not merely forgiveness. Komaeda had admitted to him, once, that it was all he ever wanted.

It was among Hinata's biggest regrets that he had shunned him then.

As the sun rose, so, too, did they, the rose-tinted refuge of hazy bliss they found in each other's arms ending far too early. Komaeda stretched languidly and turned to cup Hinata's face with a frigid hand juxtaposing his warm expression before he left, kissing him sweetly again. And again. And again. There was a solace, a deep serenity that could only be found in familiarity, security, the promise of a future together.

“I love you, Hinata-kun. See you soon. It’s bad luck, you know? Seeing each other today…”

His love. It was strange to think that in the many lifetimes he'd known love, it never failed to incur the same feeling. It was not one of earth-shattering proportions, the world did not still on its axis when confronted with his revelation. There was something ineffable scripted in his love for Komaeda, how naturally it came to them both; there was no singular moment he could cite as the moment they fell in love, simply an intrinsic part of his being, as unabating as the beat of his heart. Their love, *his* love, was an undeniable fact of life rather than a feeling, an innate guarantee that they'd fall for each other time and time again, that Hinata would *choose* him time and time again. A fact that Komaeda had grappled with each and every time.

"Komaeda! Wh— hey, Komaeda!"

The door slammed shut behind them, somehow echoing over howling winds blowing past their ears. The silence between them was deafening, drowning out the sound of the storm.

“Come back inside. It’s about to rain.”

“Take it,” he had shoved the key to their cottage into Hinata’s chest, eyes blazing. “I’m done being your pet project. Find someone else to fix.”

"Why can't you just accept that I—"

"You what?"

"Care about you, damn it!"

"Is that what this is? Caring? Prolonging both our misery and condemning everyone on the island—”

"That's not true, and you know it. All of us are going to recover. We will all be happy. It won't be the future I want for us until that's true."

"And what future do you want for us? What benefit could I possibly bring you? Hinata-kun, a life with me, any future I can promise you is wrapped in a funeral shroud. Why delay the inevitable?"

"Komaeda...just come back inside. Please."

Hinata's hands still hadn't stopped shaking.

He runs over the words in his head, smoothing down his vest one more time, wondering if Komaeda would have come with him more easily had he answered his question truthfully.

He would answer it truthfully today.

It felt more like treading water than walking, his footsteps moving in slow motion as the world around him warped and twisted along with his own tumultuous thoughts. His heart was pounding nearly as loud as the storm had that day, blinking his eyes erratically at the beams of sunlight streaming through swaying trees, illuminating his path toward the future he forged.

Hinata had a lot of regrets in his life. Many words left unspoken, resentments held, feelings left unearthed and boiling until they were fit to burst.

As he stepped into the sunlight, he knew this would not be one of them.

The future is informed by the past. One does not exist without the other, polarities circling each other in an endless loop, never to touch.

Hinata takes a shaky breath, smiling as his eyes brim with tears, grabbing the hand that had pulled him forward to reach this moment, the happiest of his life, time and time again. Always the first to reach out, to comfort, confuse, ceaselessly amaze.

Hinata promised himself he'd never let go again.

And as Komaeda laughed brightly, outshining the golden glow of the setting sun, Hinata wished he had said...

"Nagito. Throughout our lives we have been reintroduced to each other countless times—lovers, friends, enemies. There has not been a moment where you do not challenge me, aggravate me, consume all my thoughts with nothing but you. There has not been a moment where I haven’t loved you," he takes a shaky breath and grabs Komaeda's right hand, slowly sliding a golden band onto his fourth finger.

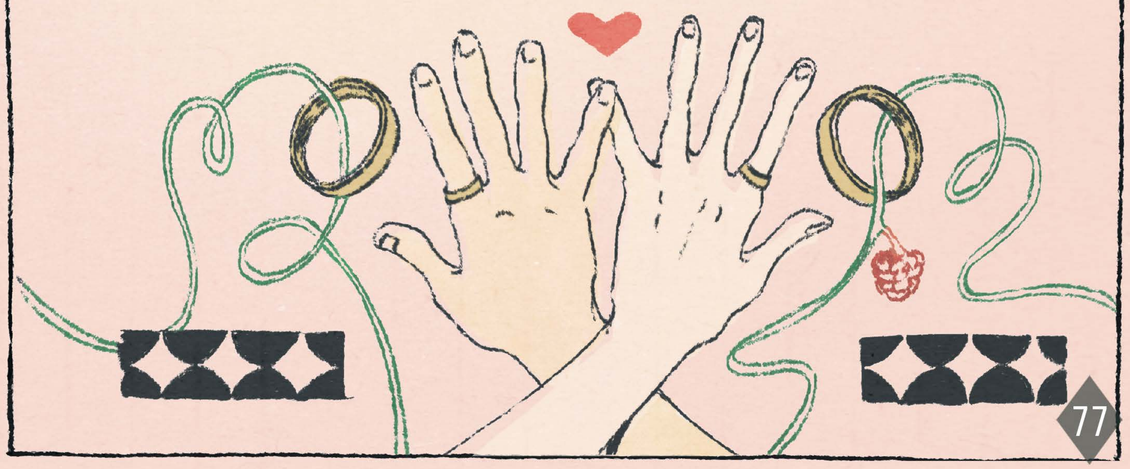
He'd said he wanted to feel the sensation of it.

"You deserve happiness, Nagito. You deserve to know that you are loved and cherished, not a burden but a pleasure, worthy of forgiveness and adoration. All my life I have been chasing after you, wanting you, to understand you, to be able to stand next to you and promise you the world. I love you, Nagito. Unequivocally. And I'll spend the rest of my life making sure you know."

All the time Komaeda had scorned him, vexed him, driven him mad and empty, the years of chasing and wanting were all worth it.

All worth it to hear him say, "I do."

And as Hinata reintroduced himself a final time as Komaeda’s husband, he let go of every regret held inside him, breaching the future and starting anew. Together.



Komaeda Nagito,

I can't even begin to tell you how many times I've written and rewritten this letter. There's at least three different drafts that I tossed after the greeting. 'Hello,' 'My dearest Komaeda,' 'My beloved,' and it only gets more embarrassing from there. I think at some point, the Ultimate Poet tried to pop out. But that's not me, and I want you to know me. So I scrapped them.

I'm not sure who you'll remember me as when you wake up. Maybe the reserve course student, maybe the ultimate hope, maybe the one with a talent unidentifiable. I, on the other hand, remember everything. I remember the way you used to bully me back in school, before we held hands without looking each other in the eyes and kissed where no one could see. I remember the way you would follow me around like a lost puppy when the world was consumed with despair. I remember the ways you infuriated me in the Neo World Program, always keeping me on my toes during investigations and trials while still trying to comfort me in my cabin during the night. You always kept me guessing. It drove me absolutely crazy, and I loved you for it.

Even now, you still keep me guessing. I'm sitting beside your pod like I always do, waiting and waiting and ***waiting*** for you to wake up. My heart skips a beat every time you twitch, at every breath that's different from the others, at any sign that ***this*** is the moment you wake up. It's not comforting that I can monitor what's going on inside your head through World Destroyer, because I can see you're stuck in a dream that has nothing to do with me. I'm only there to kill it. I'm only there to tear down these walls you've built in the depths of your mind and make you wake up. It doesn't feel great, but it does at least make me happy to see you be so friendly with the other Ultimates. They're all waiting for you to wake up, too, you know.

Speaking of the other Ultimates, I've been working with Souda to build you a new hand. To be honest, I'm terrified about how you're going to feel about it when you wake up. The only thing that gets me through is the thought of sliding a ring on one of your mechanical fingers, something I built for you so you could be reborn into hope. Well, that's what I imagine you'll have to say about it, or what I ***hope***, because I'm also so afraid that it'll make you despair. So I have to think of the ring again, something I'm making by myself so I can keep my hands busy while watching over your pod. I want to engrave something inside of it, something special for you, only for you to see. I'm not quite sure I've figured out what it is. Luckily, you're giving me all the time in the world to think.

God, I wish you would just wake up. This isn't supposed to be the end for us. We even used to talk about spending the rest of our lives together. It seemed so stupid then, we were so young, but now I can't imagine myself beside anyone but you for the rest of my days. It's you, Komaeda Nagito, it's always been you. In every lifetime, every timeline, every universe, it's ***you***.

I love you. I always have. And, no matter what, I always will. All you have to do is wake up.

Hinata Hajime

THE FUTURE IS OURS

THE ULTIMATES

KO
head mod.
organizational, socials, graphics, formatting

IG: meshimeow
TWT: nyagitokomeowda

ASHLEY
finance mod.
finances, merch.

IG: usaminii
TWT: usaminii

BEE
social media mod.
socials, organizational.

CARRD: hivezines

RED
translator.
game developer.

TWT: akai_koutei

GABE
graphic
graphic design

IG: komqtose
TWT: komqtose

FLYNN
game director.
coding, writing mod.

IG: towflyn

FELIX
art mod.
illustration.

IG: nananacka

ALI
graphic mod.
graphic design

IG: alitafae
TWT: shojostyle

DWIGHT
shipping mod.
shipping

PRE-DESPAIR

RASS
spread artist.

IG: rass_berres
TWT: rass_berres

PAGE 2, 3

MINH
page artist.

TUMBLR: minhtblue
TWT: minhtblue

PAGE 4

KOTA
page artist.

IG: meshimeow
TWT: nyagitokomeowda

PAGE 5

KB20XX
comic artist.

IG/TUMBLR: kb20xx
TWT: KB20XX

PAGE 12-15

ARA
page artist.

IG: syao_ra
TWT: syao_ra

PAGE 16

SORREL
page artist.

IG: sorrelartz
TWT: sorrelartz

PAGE 17

OLIVIA
writer.

AO3: olivemyheart
TWT: olivemy_heart

PAGE 6-11

DESPAIR

ALEX
page artist.

IG: awoookado
TWT: awoookado

PAGE 18

NANA
page artist.

IG: loiska.j
TWT: loiska_j

PAGE 19

CHARMY
spread artist.

TUMBLR: charmy-s-thing

PAGE 20, 21

PORSZA
page artist.

IG: dawnquill22432
TWT: PORSZAAAA

PAGE 29

ARA
page artist.

TWT: metanamed
TUMBLR: metaname

PAGE 30

CORIN
page artist.

IG: cornsketches
TWT: cornsketches

PAGE 31

KOTA
writer.

AO3: meshizuru

PAGE 22-28

CARMEN
writer.

AO3: kidcarma

PAGE 22-28

NEO WORLD PROGRAM

FLYNN
page artist.

IG: towflyn

PAGE 33

ZOOT
comic artist.

IG: z.oot

PAGE 34-37

CEL
spread artist.

IG/TUMBLR: celchuno
TWT: celchuno

PAGE 38, 39

CHALK
page artist.

IG: cchalkk

PAGE 40

NEO WORLD PROGRAM

RENGY
page artist.

IG: rengy_oki
TWT: rerengy

PAGE 45

SUNNY
page artist.

TUMBLR: sir-sunny
TWT: sir____sunny

PAGE 46

AL
writer.

AO3: anantagonist
TWT: someantagonist

PAGE 41-44

SDR2.5 OVA

CHU
page artist.

IG: chuyouout
TWT: chuyouout

PAGE 47

KARU
spread artist.

IG: karusketch
TWT: _karusketch_

PAGE 48, 49

AJEX
page artist.

IG: axajexx
TWT: axajex

PAGE 55

ARIES
page artist.

IG/TWT: aries_petal
TUMBLR: ariespetal

PAGE 56-59

SISSI
page artist.

IG: marswueste
TWT: marswueste

PAGE 60

MARS
page artist.

IG: mars.sunflowers

PAGE 61

MO
writer.

AO3: moshimochi
TWT: m0shim0chi

PAGE 50-54

POST-GAME

NENA
page artist.

IG: nena.nugget
TWT: nenanugget

PAGE 62

YNDR
page artist.

TWT: yndr4hope

PAGE 63

CHIBIGAIA
comic artist.

TWT: chibigacchan
IG: chibigaia

PAGE 64-67

MIRU
page artist.

TWT: _miruo

PAGE 72

IMNITIS
page artist.

IG: zircoot
TWT: ZIRCOOT_

PAGE 73

GABBY
spread artist.

IG: moochisun
TWT: moochisun

PAGE 78-79

MAO
spread artist.

TWT: expuella

PAGE 80

LINK
writer.

AO3: meshinuii
TWT: meshinuii

PAGE 74-77

STARSINEW
writer.

AO3: starsinew

PAGE 68-71

SOL
cover artist.

IG: sol_illo
TWT: sol_illo

COVER

MERCH ARTISTS

KHEE

sticker, charm, and acrylic stand.

IG: cactuskhee
TWT: cactuskhee

LAZLO

sticker, charm.

IG: 52herzzt
TWT: 52herzzt

MERCH ARTISTS

SAM

print, sticker, pin.

IG: wilddaggers
TWT: wilddaggers

HAM

button, charm.

IG: babirousa
TWT: babirousa

MERCH ARTISTS

CATRíONA
print, washi tape

IG: sun.tails
TWT: suntails

SHOE
digital merch, sticker

TWT: shoelaced3

MERCH ARTISTS

SORREL
print.

IG: sorrelartz
TWT: sorrelartz

NENA
postcard.

IG: nena.nugget
TWT: nenanugget

MERCH ARTISTS

ZOE
sticker sheet

IG: zoep_illustration

CLOVER
love letter writer

AO3: sugarlipx
TWT: _sugarlipx_

itten and rewritten this let
greeting. ‘Hello,’ ‘My deare
rassing from there. I think
ot me, and I want you to k

ake up. Maybe the reserve
th a talent unidentifiable.
ay you used to bully me ba
ther in the eyes and kisse
me around like a lost pup
ays you infuriated me in th
g investigations and trials
u always kept me guessin

ide your pod like I always
t skips a beat every time y
sign that ***this*** is the momer
g on inside your head thro
that has nothing to do wi
walls you’ve built in the d
at, but it does at least mak
ey’re all waiting for you to

ith Souda to build you a n
el about it when you wake
a ring on one of your mech
orn into hope. Well, that’s
imagine you’ll have to say about it, or what I ***hope***, because I’m also so afraid t
make you despair. So I have to think of the ring again, something I’m making b
can keep my hands busy while watching over your pod. I want to engrave some
of it, something special for you, only for you to see. I’m not quite sure I’ve figu
it is. Luckily, you’re giving me all the time in the world to think.

THANK YOU!

We set out from the start to make a wonderful tribute to KomaHina, in all forms and parts of their story. As well, we wanted to make a tribute to the KomaHina fandom, new and old, for being such a lovely and fun community.

Every single contributor brought that passion we wanted to capture, and their hard work and creativity - such an amazing zine wouldn’t be possible without them.

Overall, THE FUTURE IS OURS was a labor of love, from the mods who ran it, to the contributors who participated, and those who patiently and enthusiastically supported this project from start to finish.

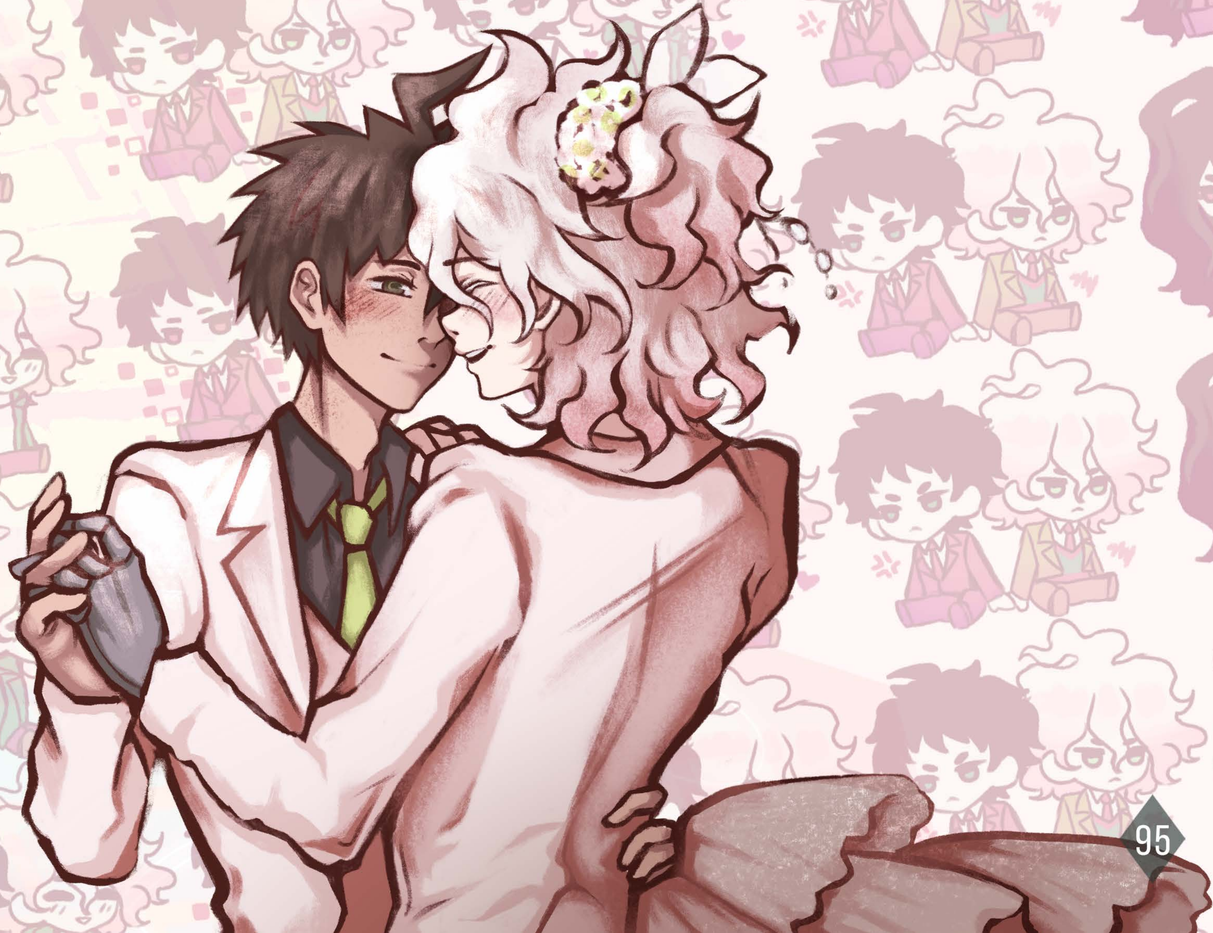
With that, I can safely say we achieved our goal of making a tribute to both KomaHina and the community that surrounds this ship with love.

Thank you so, so much, from the bottom of our hearts, for your time, support, and love.

We hope you enjoy this experiencing zine as much as we enjoyed creating it.

The Future is ***Ours***.

Just Married!



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